



ISSUE 4 / SPRING 2010

# irregular

## VIKING RAIDERS

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# Swashbuckling!

ARTIST SHOWCASE  
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TUTORIAL  
PAINTING FACES

PLUS NEWS, REVIEWS, SHORT STORY AND MUCH MUCH MORE



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Irregular Magazine

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## Editorial

Nick

First of all, I'd just like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to my request for feedback in the last issue, be it by emailing us or coming to see us at one of the events we've attended so far this year. We are taking on board everything you say, even if we can't necessarily act on it all at once.

I would like to take this opportunity to address one of the points that has been raised a few times since we started producing Irregular - namely, are we going to do a printed version of the magazine?

Well, it is something we are looking into - those of you who saw us at the painting event at Maelstrom in February will have been able to take a look at our demo copy of issue 3, which was produced by a print-on-demand service called Lulu. If we do produce a printed version, then this is the sort of quality we want to be able to provide to you. The downside to this is the price of getting such a product printed - if we go through the print-on-demand route, then a copy of issue 3 would set you back roughly £15, including postage.

When I first saw that costing, I recoiled, but remember that we are talking about a quarterly magazine here, not a monthly - it works out at roughly £5 per month, which is only slightly more than White Dwarf, for instance. Also, as Irregular is not concerned with making a profit, we would be making sure that the magazine was supplied to you at cost, rather than with a mark-up.

As it stands, we've not reached any final decisions on the subject of printing, and I'm sure it is a subject that will cause much debate at the next Irregular staff meeting. Hopefully I'll be able to report back with more information in the summer, but we'll see. In the meantime, we do have a poll running on the website regarding what sort of interest there is in getting the magazine printed, so please make sure you vote.

Failing that, I'll see you all in the cricket season.....

\*\*\*\*\*

Jason

Hi folks, we're back with another hobby-filled magazine. It's been a busy few months for me, as well as for a lot of the guys & gals involved in Irregular. I've moved house, and Sheffield Irregulars have started the show season, attending a couple of shows to date - one of which included providing painting demonstrations at a Warlord Games event.

This issue sees some great articles and two excellent interviews with recognisable faces from the hobby - we managed to bag interviews with Mike McVey, former 'Eavy Metal painter and sculptor, and Andy Remic, an outstanding Sci-Fi & Fantasy author. On top of that we have a fantastic face painting tutorial by 2009 Golden Demon Winner David Heathfield, also known as Mr. Scream on various forums.

Mr. Barker has pulled out another RPG gem, this time for Traveller, so check that one out. Dave is becoming infamous within Sheffield Irregulars and on-line for his amazing hobby collection, which should be checked out at the Azalean Empire. I've finally seen this in the flesh - well, metal and plastic; you get what I mean, I hope - and it is bigger in real life than the pictures do justice.

We also have another great instalment of Tuk Tuk from Will, along with a plethora of other great articles.

Oh, before I forget, check out the Art Competition on page 5.

Next issue sees our first anniversary, and we have some plans for that issue that should not be missed. I'll tell you all the story of how this enterprise came about - and yes, it did involve a pub, some beer, and me getting slightly drunk. Are you starting to get the picture yet?

Well that's all for now folks - I'll see you next issue, and enjoy this one.

# News

## Triples 2010 - Martin Walters

April sees the return of Sheffield Triples, the wargames show organised by Sheffield Wargames Society. Triples is a mix of traders, demonstrations and participation games. Past shows have seen vast Napoleonic games, tank hunting dogs and gnome snail riders defending their garden home. Triples has something for every gamer, whether you prefer to battle in space, in the air, on the seven seas or across the open fields there are enough games and suppliers to interest everyone.

This year's show takes place in a new venue, the English Institute of Sport (EIS Coleridge Road S9 5DA) in the Don Valley. This means better transport links, more parking and more space than the previous venue. It also means a new addition is possible - a medieval combat and archery tournament, where you can marvel at men in armour trying to outdo each other in various Olde Worlde sporting events.

Triples is the biggest show in the north of England, second only to Salute in terms of size, yet it manages to retain a friendly atmosphere. Traders and gamers are only too happy to talk about their latest efforts or future projects. It is a good place to meet up with fellow gamers and hatch plans for your next big project, or to find the figure - or range - you've been looking out for.

Keep the 17th and 18th April free, save four pound coins for the entry fee - three for children and concessions - and another couple of hundred for figures, and I'll see you there.

If you need more information leave a message on the Sheffield Triples 2010 Facebook page or email [triples@sheffieldwargames.co.uk](mailto:triples@sheffieldwargames.co.uk).



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# Illustration competition

- darkness -daa(r)k-nus: 1. Absence of light and illumination; 2. An unilluminated area; 3. Absence of moral or spiritual values.

This issue we're starting an art competition asking for brave artists to venture deep into the darkest realms of human nature and produce an original A5 illustration using "Darkness" as the subject.

Will you go for a creepy environment? Or will you depict a creature which is so gruesome that people will be afraid to look at it? It's up to you.

So we want to know: Can you paint Darkness? So jump right in and don't be afraid of the dark! We are looking forward to see your illustration if you have the guts!

**Deadline: Sunday May 30th 2010**

All entries must be submitted by email by the closing date, Sunday May 30th 2010

## Rules:

- The artwork **MUST** be your own, original piece
- You **MUST NOT** use copyrighted iconography or imagery, or re-create a trademarked character/figure - we want to see something original!
- You **MUST** allow Irregular Magazine the rights to include the image in issue 5 / summer '10, but the image remains your own copyright
- You can use **ANY** medium to create your art - examples include: pencil, charcoal, ink, paint, digital painting, etc
- If you create a digital painting, you **MUST NOT** use copyright textures or imagery in your work
- Your entry **MUST** be A5 size and in a **PORTRAIT** format only.

There will be one winner, and the judges decision is final.

No cash alternative will be provided for the prize.

The winning entry, along with a selection of others, will be included in issue 5 / summer '10

All entries must be submitted by the deadline to be considered

## How to enter:

- Create an original art piece on the subject of Darkness, in an A5 format
- Send us a 300dpi jpeg file of your artwork by email to: [irregularmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:irregularmagazine@gmail.com)
- Include your name (so we can credit you in the magazine!), the name of your entry, and the medium/s you used to create it.





### Judging & Prize:

Cover artist from issue 3, and super talented artist, Ricardo Guimaraes, will be looking for originality and creativity in your work.

Kingdom Death are providing a fantastic prize for the winner - a stunning print of their new poster painted by Joshua Dunbar.

### About the sponsor

**Kingdom Death** : Adventures into the abyss is an independent, lovingly crafted, high-quality, hobby board game. Pitting a table full of friends against countless abominations, terrors, and challenges. Gorgeous 35mm scale miniatures represent survivors in a world where humanity is a speck of dust living a pitifully fractured, and unchronicled existence. Only the deeply deranged would attempt to fight back.

Accept this land as your deathbed. Wave goodbye to your sanity and dare to challenge the impossible!





# Night of the Living Dead Competition Results

In our last issue we ran a miniature figure painting competition, with the theme: **Night of the Living Dead**.

You rose (from the grave) to the challenge, and submitted some stunning entries.

Award winning painter Nigel Carman took his time judging, and it looks like it was a close contest - here are the results...

The winner of the competition:  
**Revenant Entry supplied by Lost Boy**

## Judge's comments:

Lovely work on this, the colours used and their complementary nature work really well to set the scene.

The base work is fantastic with a wet/damp nautical feel prevalent throughout the mini. I can imagine this guy being at the bottom of the ocean rotting away.

Brilliant.

9/10



The only name supplied by the artist was 'Lost Boy', but we will be contacting him via email to arrange for him to get his prizes from Mantic Games.

**Mantic Games** provided a messenger bag, a regiment of 20 Skeletons, and a Command Squad for an undead army - so it looks like Lost Boy is going to have a new horde of undead to paint very soon.

**Congratulations!**

## Runners Up

### Necromancer Entry supplied by John Siegel



#### Judge's comments:

A great entry.

The photo is dark but from what I can see this pushes all the buttons. The zombies erupting from the earth have a lovely random, organic feel.

The base work complements this well. These added together help create a disturbing scene. 8/10

### Undead Troll Entry supplied by Mike Pageau



#### Judge's comments:

Another dirty nasty undead guy. I love the malevolent nature of this mini and how you can tell he wants to eat brains!!!

The paintwork is neat but could do with smoother blends, not easy with a mini that has so much texture.

Some gloss work on the stomach entrails etc would help with a sense of festering rotten flesh.

Base work shows attention to detail, but work on the tree would have helped make it look less like a twig.

8/10

### Ghoul entry supplied by Tim Manning





### Judge's comments:

This mini really captures a nasty little guy who digs for his dinner.

Great use of blood effects to give a gooey, grotty look to the head in his hands and kudos to the hanging eyeball..... a great touch.

Smoother blends on the little guy and a sense of lighting would really help lift this mini from something good to something great.

8/10

### Undead Pirate Captain entry supplied by Malcolm Garbett



### Judge's comments:

A cool little mini (where is it from?)

The colours work well together but it could all do with some extra detail.

The yellow/gold in particular really needs more work put in to help it add some depth. The base is in need also of attention to detail, mold lines are always a no no and unfortunately this has them.

The undead theme fits in well, and I feel the choice of mini with extra work could have really lifted this piece.

6/10

### Graveyard entry supplied by Ian Pursey



### Judge's comments:

The photo for this entry is too small really for me to give it an accurate assessment.

From the details I can make out I can see that a scene has been set, and I presume a ceremony is taking place to raise the undead?

Unfortunately I find the placement of the elements in the scene very uniform and unconvincing, the lichen used as well fails to convey a sense of scale or realism.

4/10

This issue we're running an art competition, so if you don't paint miniatures, but you do have a creative streak - why not enter?



# R.P.G.

## Case's Corsairs : A Pirate Outfit for use in your Traveller Adventures

Dave Barker

This article is a description of the pirate enterprise known as Case's Corsairs. They can be used for creating encounters of many different kinds for your players, from a traditional pirate attack on the player's starship by Case's crew, to using Case himself as a patron to launch your players into some less-than-scrupulous adventures. Personally, I shall be using them for random pirate-themed encounters for my Traveller players, but don't tell them, eh? ;)

A note about version. All of the game information I've added to this article is designed for use with Mongoose's Traveller; but I hope they're of use to any classic Traveller Referee and that the background info is of use in any Traveller game - even Traveller: The New Era ;)

I have deliberately avoided including starship data as I usually use standard ships, which are easy enough to find. However, if I've mentioned something you can't find and want to use, let Irregular Magazine know and I'll get back in touch!



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## Castellan "Case" Évêque

Castellan "Case" Évêque (ee-vek) began his life as the son of a sugar-crop farmer on a backwater world. As a teenager, he earned a position as a crew-hand on a small merchant vessel and within just a few years, Case had worked his way up to First Mate on a 400 ton speculative trader. However, after one jump, a routine inbound transit to a backwater world the vessel had never visited before turned very sour when the trader was attacked by a pirate.

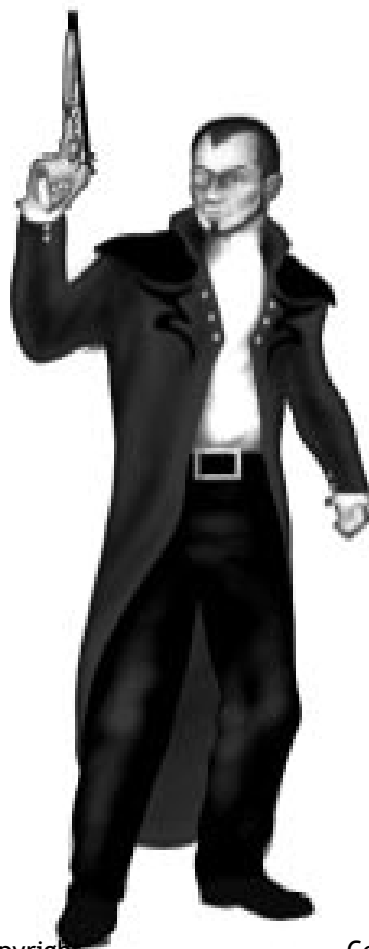
After a brief space battle, the corsair managed to bring itself alongside the trader and boarded her. But Case found he had a previously unknown talent; fighting boarding actions. The fighting was close and brutal and both captains and several crewmen from both vessels were killed. Case took the surrender of the remaining pirates and due to a mix-up planet-side, was declared a pirate and an outlaw. So Case took his new status, as well as his two vessels, and stole the fuel he needed to jump out of the system, filling both holds with ill-protected cargo from the under-defended starport.

**Castellan "Case" Évêque** Pirate Leader 984E98 Age 38 5 Terms  
Brawling-1, Computer-1, Electronic-1, Forgery-1, Gambling-1, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol)-2, Gunnery-1, Melee (Blade)-2, Pilot-2, Ship Tactics-1, Zero-G Combat-2  
Cutlass, Slug Pistol

In less than a year of successful piracy, Case built a reputation for leniency towards crews who co-operated and mercilessness with crews who crossed him. He had also expanded his pirate fleet to six ships in this time, and then had the most incredible luck in his career.

Case had started scouting unpopulated and out-of-the-way moons and planets to find somewhere he could set up a permanent base of operations for his growing pirate fleet, and to establish a semi-legitimate colony to settle some of his growing band of followers. Gas giants were a prime target for this exploration, due to the abundance of unrefined fuel available and it was orbiting the moon of one such gas giant that Case discovered a very old Imperial wreck, the INS Eyrie.

Abandoned for more than 500 years after having her jump drives destroyed in a long-forgotten war, the Eyrie was originally an Imperial



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Navy Carrier. Originally massing 3,000 tons, and equipped with docking bays, flight decks, crew quarters, maintenance facilities, workshops, and even fuel refining facilities, the Eyrie was almost the perfect base for Case's Corsairs. She even still had a flight of five 15-ton light attack fighters on board.

Ever since finding her, Case's Corsairs have been using the Eyrie as their base of operations. She's been patched up to make her airtight and had her power plants and manoeuvre drives rebuilt. She operates pretty much as a space station, now, as her jump drive doesn't seem to be repairable, but Case still hopes that someday he could do something about that!

## Case's Corsairs

Case's Corsairs currently consist of an eclectic mix of twelve starships, from traders and scout vessels to yachts, patrol vessels and even a single 800 ton mercenary cruiser that was stolen from a starport in a particularly audacious con. In addition to these starships, there is also the Eyrie and her combat patrol of five fighters as well as a small number of tugs and a couple of modular cutters fitted out for fuel collection activities.

Case himself commands the mercenary cruiser, which he has renamed The Castellan Warrior. A select band of competent pirates command his other starships, which rarely raid in bands of more than three vessels. Two of these captains are Julian Fe-Lan and Reese Chin.

**Julian Fe-Lan** Pirate Captain Age 42 6 Terms  
Brawling-1, Engineering-3, Forgery-1, Gambling-2, Melee(Blade)-1, Pilot-2, Ship Tactics-1, Streetwise-1, Tactics-2, Zero-G Combat-1  
Cutlass, Corsair

**Reese Chin** Pirate Captain AB9873 Age 34 4 Terms  
Brawling-1, Gun Combat(Energy Pistol)-2, Gunnery-1, Mechanical-2, Pilot-1, Streetwise-2, Vacc Suit-1  
Laser Pistol, Far Trader

Case also has appointed a gifted administrator, Helena van Oriel to organise and run the Eyrie for him. Van Oriel came to Case's attention when he raided a luxury yacht on which she was travelling.

She had become bored of her position running a continental agricultural co-operative on her homeworld and had cashed in her position to travel and find a new vocation. Case instantly connected with her and after a long evening of conversation over some of the yacht's finest Champagne stock, Helena found a new, challenging vocation and Case found someone he could trust to keep his base safe and improving whilst he was not there.



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**Helena van Oriel** Retired Bureaucrat Executive 5636C7 Age 46 7 Terms  
Administration-3, Computer-1, Gun Combat-2, Instruction-1, Interrogation-1, Vehicle-2  
Middle Passage, Watch

Case's Corsairs also has nearly a hundred other assorted pirate personnel, who do everything needed from maintaining and improving the state of the Eyrie, to crewing one of the pirate ships; from working on the fuel processing, to running the small school that educates the eight children that now live aboard the Eyrie.



Copyright, .....Mikolaj Ostapiuk

**Hans** Pirate Sergeant 296875 Age 38 5 Terms  
Brawling-2, Engineering-1, Gun Combat(Slug Pistol)-4, Vacc Suit-1, Zero-G Combat-1  
Slug Pistol

**Sundeeep Patel** Pirate Henchman 6875B9 Age 34 4 Terms  
Brawling-1, Forgery-1, Melee(Unarmed)-3, Navigation-1, Vacc Suit-1, Zero-G Combat-1

**Roman Cappa** Pirate 872992 Age 26 2 Terms  
Brawling-2, Forgery-1, Melee(Bludgeon)-1, Ship Tactics-1, Streetwise-1  
Large Wrench (Club)

**Miss Eleanor Jones** Scientist (School Teacher) 354A69 Age 46 7 Terms  
Carousing-1, Computer-2, Gun Combat(Slug Pistol)-1, Jack-o-T-1, Navigation-1, Vehicle-1  
Slug Pistol

### Hooks Using Case's Corsairs

Case or his Corsairs might enter your game in any number of ways.

- They could be a random pirate encounter - which is how my players will first meet them!
- Case might also make a good shady Patron;
- Or a nemesis for the players;
- Some of his people might also be hired on the same contract as your players;
- Or Corsair ships might just end up turning up in the same starports, just to give your players a bit of paranoia!

Or, of course, in any other way your imagination takes you.





Copyright.....David Soderquist

## Possible Adventures

These are just three of the possible adventures that you players might get involved with that also include Case or his Corsairs in some way:

- Case himself hires the players to carry out a commando-style raid on a remote class D starport that is harbouring some of Case's rivals in piracy. Case wants you to not only disrupt the operations of the starport, but to loot what you can and make away with his rival's starship!
- The players have been hired to transport some very important passengers. At the last minute, they also get asked to carry a few small packages for the Scout Service. After arriving in
- the destination system, they're attacked by the Corsairs, who are only after one of the Scout Service packages. Of course, the players don't know this!
- A small mining conglomerate needs to hire some freelancers to do a full survey of an uninhabited star system for them, because their own crews are refusing to go into what they consider a 'haunted' star system. Their pay is very good, but how will the players cope when Case's Corsairs find them snooping near their base?

These are just some of the ways in which you might use Case's Corsairs. But however they might turn up in your Traveller games, I hope you have fun with them!





## Viking Raiders

Jason Hubbard

Who were the Vikings? Well, they were also known as Norsemen or Northmen - here is a description from Encyclopaedia Britannica:

*Member of the Scandinavian seafaring warriors who raided and colonized wide areas of Europe from the 9th to the 11th century and whose disruptive influence profoundly affected European history.*

These pagan Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish warriors were probably prompted to undertake their raids by a combination of factors ranging from overpopulation at home to the relative helplessness of victims abroad.

So what do we know about the Vikings?

Well, the image of the horned helmet is a myth, based on a bronze Celtic helmet found in the Thames. There is no current archaeological evidence to support the image of a horned Viking helmet. Yes, they did raid the coast, but they were also proficient farmers, craftsmen and -women as well a great explorers and sailors.

The Vikings heyday was between the 8th and 11th century, during this period they colonised large areas of Europe, the UK, Iceland,



Copyright.....Matthew Mella

Greenland and were the first European settlers in what is now known as North America, or as the Vikings referred to it as Vinland.

*In Old Norse, the word is spelt vikingr. The word appears on several rune stones found in Scandinavia. In the Icelanders' sagas, viking refers to an overseas expedition (Old Norse fara í viking "to go on an expedition"), and vikingr, to a seaman or warrior taking part in such an expedition. (Wikipedia)*

The Vikings first raided the English coast in the 8th century, but it was the attack on Lindisfarne that brought them to national attention.

### Lindisfarne

It was in June 793 AD when a raiding party of Vikings attacked the monastery at Lindisfarne. This attack caused a commotion not just in England, but across Christian Europe, yet contemporary writings don't refer to the attack as being by Scandinavian Vikings. There has been speculation by modern historians that the attack may have been the work of Frisian sea farers in revenge against Charlemagne's brutal enforcement of Christianity.

*"In this year dire forewarnings came over the land of the Northumbrians, and miserably terrified the people, these were extraordinary whirlwinds and lightning's, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. A great famine soon followed these omens, and soon after that, in the same year, on the sixth of the ides of Inar, the havoc of the heathen men miserably destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne through rapine and slaughter." Anglo Saxon Chronicles 793 AD.*

The monasteries were built of wood and were partly burnt down, while documents of the day claim that the monks were carried off in chains and that some were raped. The marauders looted the monastery of its valuables, though they over looked the Lindisfarne Gospels, and a finely carved coffin that contained the relics of St. Cuthbert.

*"Never before has such an atrocity been seen,"* declared the Northumbrian scholar, Alcuin of York.

This one act has done more damage and promoted the image of raping, pillaging demons from across the sea than any other act. Until recently in the last hundred years most people regarded the Vikings as brutes who raided and pillaged their way across Europe. We now know that they were great craftsmen, traders, farmers and artists, though our greatest perception of them is as fierce warriors, who dominated warfare between the 7th -11th Century.

From 839, Varangian mercenaries in the service of the Byzantine Empire, notably Harald Hardrada, campaigned in North Africa, Jerusalem, and other places in the Middle East. Important trading ports during the period include Birka, Hedeby, Kaupang, Jorvik, Staraya Ladoga, Novgorod and Kiev.

In the 9th Century Norse Vikings started to colonise eastern England which they called Danelaw. The Anglo Saxon kings slowly re-established control over Danelaw, yet the greatest of the Anglo Saxon kings was in fact a Norwegian Viking, Canute, who conquered much of Northern England, with York becoming a major Viking settlement.

The Vikings were considered great explorers crossing the oceans to become the first settlers in North America, and settling in Iceland and Greenland. The Norse who came to Newfoundland were not fierce raiders in search of pillage and plunder. The Norse appearance here was the last step in a relatively peaceful expansion of livestock farmers across the North Atlantic, taking in parts of the British Isles, Iceland, Greenland, and finally Vinland.

### Weapons and Warfare

Most engagements would have been skirmishes, such as raids, though large battles were fought on occasion. The largest armies may have consisted of 4,000 to 7,000 men, and most of the armies would have disbanded once a campaign was over, returning to their villages or joining other war bands. Fleets could consist of anything from between 100 - 200 ships, with crews of anything between 25-60 warriors.





was under the bridge. Whilst the Viking was distracted he thrust his spear up through the planks of the bridge killing the axe-wielding warrior, allowing the Saxons to pour across to attack the Viking horde.

Vikings were professional warriors who fought in close combat and were well armed. They utilised the shield for defence and offensive action. Shields were generally round and of lime wood construction, with a large iron boss in the centre. The shield could be used to push and barge the opponent off balance, as well as block thrusts and cuts from all weapons.

The Viking culture was at its height during the 8th to 11th centuries, raiding, trading and settling across Europe. During this period the sight of Viking warriors spread fear amongst the population of Europe.

The longship's shallow draught allowed the Vikings to travel inland along rivers, which meant they could mount lightning raids deep in enemy territory before the alarm could be raised.

The Viking longships were ideal for coastal raiding, due to it's shallow draft, they were able to land on any coastal beach or sail inland via one of the rivers. They made swift hit and run raids, targeting villages, towns and religious sites.

The axe is the weapon we associate with the Vikings of this period, with the large broad battleaxe as the weapon of choice for the blood-thirsty Norsemen.

An excellent example of its use in battle was on 25th September 1066, at the battle of Stamford Bridge. Norwegian King Harald Hardrada led an army against England for the crown. The Viking troops were on the opposite side of the river Derwent from the English Saxons under the command of Harold Godwinson.

The only way for the English troops to engage the Vikings was via a wooden bridge. One man held the Saxons at bay for a considerable length of time, armed with a huge battleaxe, which had an 11 inch blade and it's long haft gave the wielder a 7 ft clearance sweep. Several Saxons were killed and injured attempting to cross the bridge, until one enterprising housecarl floated down river until he



Copyright.....Jason Hubbard

# Plague, Pestilence and Disease

## Using and implementing a pandemic in a campaign.

Jason Hubbard

With the rise of Swine Flu, and all the media attention thrown at it, I thought I'd write an article looking at how players could implement a pandemic during a campaign, and how this could affect the players, armies, battles and encounters. I will also take a closer look at the Black Death, which had a devastating effect on Europe during both the Late Roman Period and the Middle Ages.

### What is a Pandemic?

A pandemic is an epidemic of infectious disease that is spreading through human populations across a large region; for instance a continent, or even worldwide. Recently we have witnessed the emergence of Swine Flu and seen through the medium of TV, newspapers and the internet the global spread of the disease.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a pandemic can start when three conditions have been met:

- emergence of a disease new to a population;
- agents infect humans, causing serious illness; and
- agents spread easily and sustainably among humans.

In the past there have been several pandemics with devastating consequences; these have included the Black Death during the medieval period, Spanish Influenza in 1918-1919 and the Bubonic Plague in the 17th century.

### A list of historical Pandemics

- Plague of Athens, 430 BC. Typhoid fever
- 541: the Plague of Justinian, believed to be The Black Death.
- 1300s: the Black Death
- 1501 - 1587: Typhus
- 1732 - 1733: influenza
- 1855 - 1950s: bubonic plague: Third Pandemic
- 1918 - 1920: influenza: Spanish flu

- 1957 - 1958: influenza: Asian flu
- 1968 - 1969: influenza: Hong Kong flu
- 1960s: cholera called El Tor
- 1980s - present: HIV
- 2009 - present: influenza: 2009 swine flu pandemic

### The Black Death

The Black Death was one of the worst natural disasters to hit Europe, and it did so twice, first in the late 5-6th century AD and the second time during the 14th century AD. We have more information on the second disaster, whereas the first pandemic, also known as Justinian's Flea, is an outbreak we have very little written documentation about. On both occasions it caused millions of deaths and the consequences were devastating.

Both pandemics changed the course of history - the first saw the end of the ancient world and brought us towards medieval Europe, whereas the occurrence in the medieval period brought us enlightenment and the birth of the modern world. We know that the plague of 1347 killed one third of the population of Europe, and "the impact upon the future of England was greater than upon any other European country." (Cartwright, 1991).

We now know the plague was carried by the fleas of the brown rat or Asian Rat. Both of these pandemics came in the wake of climatic change, as the change in climate allowed the rats to breed beyond their normal rate, which meant they came into closer contact with humans and so the disease spread initially due to an explosion in the rat population. It is believed that the plague first emerged in Asia and followed traders, armies and people moving west along the trade routes. The plague spread due to people trying to move away from plague-infested towns and cities, carrying the disease with them.



## End of the Ancient World

Climatic change between the 4th - 6th century gave rise to a pandemic we now know was most likely the Black Death. Descriptions in written documentation by citizens of Byzantine Empire suggest that this disease was the same as that of the 14th Century AD.

*"This disease always took its start from the coast, and then went up to the interior."* Procopius, History of the Wars, II, xxii, 8

Again it seems to have risen in the east and possibly in Africa as well, which also explains some of the migration of various people during this period into the west, which affected the Roman Empire. Slowly the disease made it way across Asia and Africa into Europe where it devastated the European community.

*A day's moderate fever would be followed by a week of delirium. Buboes would appear under the arms, in the groin, behind the ears, and grow to the size of melons. Edemas - of blood - infiltrated the nerve endings of the swollen lymphatic glands, causing massive pain. Sometimes the buboes would burst in a shower of the foul-smelling leukocytes called pus. Sometimes the plague would become what a modern epidemiologist would describe as "septicemic" ; those victims would die vomiting blood from internal hemorrhages that formed even more rapidly than the buboes. Those who contracted septicemic plague might have been the fortunate ones; though they all died (bubonic plague kills "only" four to seven out of ten victims, septicemic plague is virtually 100% deadly) they at least died fast. They weren't tortured with pain for a week or more, nor did they go insane, as thousands of citizens of Constantinople did, leaping into the sea in the hope of ending their suffering.* William Rosen, Justinian's Flea

As we can see from the above description it is very similar to the disease of the 14th Century, so we can assume that the pandemic of the 6th Century had the same devastating effect on the population, economy and society as the Black Death did in the Medieval period.

Around 25 million people were killed by the disease, which weakened both the Roman and Persian Empires.

Islam spread in the wake of the disease moving across the middle east and into Africa, giving rise to a number of Islamic nations and dynasties.

## 14th Century Black Death

The biggest change in the 14th century was due to the disease was the economy, with the loss of so many people there were fewer peasants to work the land. Those who survived demanded higher wages, Landlords increased rents and taxation became higher. The peasant class now had a greater say, the disease brought about the eventual death of the feudal system.

The medieval church lost some of its authority because they failed to give answers to why it happened - they said it was God's will but couldn't explain why. In many places priests abandoned their duties and fled in the wake of the plague, deserting their parishioners.

Society was changed by the disease - whole villages became abandoned, while noble lines ended with the plague. Events that followed the Black Death that can be attributed to it, such the Peasants Revolt of 1381, which was caused by high taxation and charters that forced peasants to stay on low wages whilst paying high rents. It took nearly 400 years before the population was at pre-pandemic levels, wealth moved from being land-based to a more portable skills, money and services. More people moved into towns and cities, which meant that rural society declined and gave birth to modern way of life.

## Are we at risk today?

The disease hasn't disappeared - there are several cases each year across the globe, though as yet it hasn't erupted in to an epidemic or pandemic. Are we at risk from the disease today? The answer is yes, though there are antibiotics to treat the disease. Recently a new strain was found in Madagascar that is

antibiotic-resistant, as with any disease there is always a possibility of it becoming an epidemic or worse a pandemic. Recently we saw how quickly Swine Flu spread across the globe last year, with modern transportation and movement of goods and people, a disease will probably find it easier to disperse across the world in today's modern world.

So how could, or should, you use a pandemic during a campaign?

*"There were corpses which split open and rotted on the streets with nobody to bury them".* Procopius, 6th Century AD.

Using a plague situation as part of a campaign could have some interesting results, as an epidemic or pandemic will affect all those playing.

During the 6th Century AD in Constantinople between 5-12,000 people were dying a day when the plague was most virulent. Imagine what could have happened if the Spanish Influenza had occurred during the hostilities of the Great War (1914-18) rather than at the end of the war in 1919. The disease may have ended the conflict early or have swung the war in the favour of the German Army, or even helped to prolong the war in some bizarre way.

If troops need to move through an infected area they may lose a small number of men to the disease; if they are forced to spend longer within an infected area then the chances of the disease spreading through the army is more likely.

Each day or week longer they spend within the infected zone will increase the rate of casualties, or delay the army's movement due to troops being too ill to move.

It is possible that an army could be destroyed by a breakout of a rather nasty and virulent disease rather than through battle.

There is also the possibility that when an army leaves an infected region that the disease is spread further afield by the troops. This was the case during the Black Death of the 14th Century, with Flagellants moved from city to

city spreading the disease in their wake. Food could be another area of contamination, for instance cattle could be carriers of anthrax which can be passed on to humans.

A disease could start as a localised epidemic and only become a pandemic as it slowly spreads across the campaign map. Troop movement could be the way a disease spreads, or a number of other factors could contribute, such as civilian refugee movement or it's spread within the population of wildlife such as birds - especially if the disease in question is Bird Flu.

The use of a disease during a campaign could be an interesting one, that adds another dimension to a game, which swings the balance of the campaign in unusual and intriguing ways. The idea of a disease playing a major role in a campaign setting will not only work for historical settings, but also fantasy such as Warhammer, through the use of the Chaos Gods. It would also make a near future game very interesting and could be the major plot line for the campaign, you could have a disease that turns its victims into Zombies, adding a further dimension and foe to the campaign.

I've not supplied any rules for the use of a disease into your campaign, but guidelines, as I feel the rules should be created by those playing in the campaign and ones that suit the rule system you're playing with. I would advise setting up a set of simple rules, maybe with tables so that you can utilise them in any future campaigns you decide to run.

## Further Reading

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# SHORT STORY

## Reaching for the Moon

John Treadaway © 2006

"Come in, sit down," he said, in a tone that betrayed a familiarity with both giving and receiving orders. He ushered me into a small, unexpectedly humble room, with a low ceiling and subdued drapes and - with a precise jab of his right index finger - indicated one of a pair of low couches. I duly perched on the edge of the softly padded 'chaise-longue'. Such was his bearing that I almost found myself sitting 'to attention'. He certainly knew how to make a man nervous...

"Is it... er, alright if..." I hesitated, and cleared my throat before adding, "can I start my recorder?"

"Sure - no problems," he replied. He sat heavily on the other couch and ran his hands through his grey hair, full but cropped in a short military cut. "Best to get this down while you have the chance, I suppose," he added with a thin smile.

"Thanks." I then added in a clear voice, "Begin, please," and heard the recorder start up. "So," I ventured, "what was it like to be the first person ever to do what you have done: to... what was it called? To make that 'giant leap' for mankind?"

He smiled. "Well it wasn't so much a leap as an act of desperation... I almost fell, you know!" The smile started to fade, becoming almost a scowl. He seemed to consider his next words for a while before continuing.

"I realise that my actions have always been portrayed in a dramatic - perhaps overly dramatic way... for the press mostly. And the top brass, well: they always try to make everything seem more than it is... More than it was..." he paused and looked down at the hem of his tunic. "They wanted me to look good so they could bask in 'reflected glory', I suppose. But really, I was just doing my job. After all," he added, looking up again, "I'd been in the services for a number of years and I was used to taking orders... taking risks. So when you get the orders you just follow them, like we did in the war. I was just earning my pay."

He began to smile again as he added, "You must know that things like this are rarely as glamorous as they are portrayed to the folks back home! The world needs to make heroes out of people, even if they don't much deserve it."

I'd heard he was notoriously self-effacing. Before I'd met him I thought it might have been false modesty but - even after this short time in conversation with him - I was pretty sure he was someone who was being honest when he said that he said he was just doing his job. Still, I needed to ask my questions, for those same 'folks back home'.

"But surely," I asked, "to leave the known world, as you did; to stamp your boot print into that harsh, alien soil. That must have been thrilling!"

He settled back into his seat, beginning to relax a little, perhaps. But then he seemed to do a 'double take': he glanced to his left - noticing the recorder sitting at the desk, as if for the first time - and he stiffened slightly. He turned back and forth between myself and the recorder, almost like an old warrior caught at bay... But when he finally turned to me again he seemed to settle down and - with an almost 'gallic' shrug - he relaxed somewhat, though not quite completely: it looked as though he was making a real effort to ignore the recording process.

"Listen," he said after a few moments, "I'd been in the services since that Asian nonsense. I had several kills to my name - and in one-to-one combat, moreover. So - to be completely honest - the whole venture was, when it started... well: it seemed to be all 'much of a muchness' to me..." he paused. "... but, yes: I can't pretend that - as time went by - that I did come to realise that it was something else as well. To leave the circles of our world... to leave it all behind and to be washed up on that 'alien shore', as it were. Yes," he added, raising his chin slightly and fixing me with hard, grey eyes: "Yes, it was sort of special, I guess."

There was a pause in our question and answer session while we both ordered drinks from an attendant. I consulted my notes and asked my next question: one that I had been 'saving up' for a while.

"Can I ask then... did you think - after that first trip and the landings made the following year..."

"Not by me, though," he interjected, moving quickly to the edge of his seat and stiffening, becoming visibly animated. "Never by me... I never had a chance to go back, you know." His face had become hard again: all angles caught in the shadows of the desk lamp that sat on the desk next to the recorder.

"It was the 'Top brass' again, you see? It just wasn't the military mindset that I was used to, you have to understand, but bigger issues were in play. The political focus came to have a bearing on my actions and my 'future options', for want of a better phrase. I was, it transpired, too valuable - as a 'standard bearer' - to be risked on another voyage. So I never went again." He added the last phrase with a mournful expression and his shoulders slumped as he sat back on the couch.

"Ah... I didn't realise that..." I paused, glanced again at my notes and then looked up at him once more.

"But, even with your lack of involvement in the subsequent missions," I continued, "did you ever think, as you stood there in that harsh sun light, its heat building up in your helmet as you gazed out over the sandy dunes..." I was quoting directly from my prepared notes at this point, I have to say, "did it cross your mind that - after the landings of the following year - it would be forty years later and yet still no one has returned? Despite the initial enthusiasm for the project, we have no forward base, like we were promised. Certainly no colonisation - actual or even planned. Not even any more landings by ships. Nothing."

I looked at his steely eyes, which now seemed quite vacant and very hard to read. His expression seemed 'far away'; looking, perhaps, in reverie, at his own, distant memories: his own past - or passed glories. For the first time since we met, I suddenly became aware of his age: Seventy? Older? I wasn't sure.

There was a long silence. He seemed to be struggling to articulate what he felt. "No, to be honest, I didn't think that it would go down like this." He added, quietly. As he spoke, he dropped his gaze down to the tiled,



mosaic floor. He seemed reluctant to carry on the interview.

"Some people say that we will return - that, even now, the Senate have passed a motion and agreed a plan to go back," I ventured, after a few seconds: I was trying to sound 'up tempo' and was anxious to fill the silence and not let the interview just trail off. I checked the recorder was still working: he nodded at me as he changed to a new sheet. I continued...

"I've heard it said that - with this new plan and budget in place - within twenty years we'll be back: to stake a new claim. What do you think of that?" He glanced up at me at this point and I hit him with the real question - the one I'd been wanting to ask; the one I'd been planning for in all of my months of preparation for this interview:

"If they offered it to you - for you to return - would you go?"

"In a heartbeat" he affirmed. "Or... well, someone's got to! Anyway, we ought to do something to explore these new frontiers... unless we want the Chinese to do it all ahead of us. Or the Persians. But it needs two things: the political will and shit loads of money." He settled himself into what I guessed was a well-used argument: probably one he'd recounted to anyone who'd listen in a thousand drinking establishments from here to Luxor.

"The chances are," he continued, finding his pace, "that it'll take another man of vision - like Julius was - before we make another landing on the new frontier. But when the time is right, when there's enough glory to be won - and enough money to be made - then the right man will lead another expedition, I expect. Trouble is, when will that be?" he added, his face crumpling to sadness, "Five'll get you ten I won't be there. There's so few of us old original explorers left now. Just a handful of that first crew, and soon there'll be none. If it is twenty years from now... I'll be long gone." "There's less than nine of you left, by my calculations." I interjected.



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"Exactly!" he became agitated - almost angry - at that point. "We've lost so much time already. Why, the mineral wealth alone, from the surveys that we had done, showed that the place is worth a fortune if it's mined properly. What on earth were our politicians thinking? What are they doing with the wealth of our empire? They've pissed it away, that's what they've done, along with our lead and our technological advantage!" He added "Such a waste..." in a quiet mutter as he reached for his drink.

I looked at him as he downed the contents of the goblet in one. At that point - but at no other time during our interview - he appeared to be a beaten, old man and I felt genuinely sorry for him, I have to say. We spent the hour or so covering a number of only semi-related topics: his war record and what he'd done since his return (short answer: businessman - result: failure). His marriages. Even his legendary drinking... I then sought to finish the talk on a



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'fun' note that I knew my readers would like.

"I have two more questions, then before we end this talk" I tried to sound up-tempo again. "Firstly: Mars. Any plans?"

"I prayed to the lot: still do." was his short reply. "We all did in the Tenth: just to be on the safe side, so - even though I was a soldier - Mars got no special treatment from me. What else?"

His abrupt manner suggested that, whether I liked it or not, this was the last question of our interview.

"Well, the last question I have to ask is this: I've met a hundred people who said that, frankly, it was all a hoax - that you never landed and that it was all a publicity stunt cooked up to bolster the political needs of a Senator with delusions of god-hood. A fantasy: like flying to the moon. What's your answer to that?" He looked visibly shaken. "What!?" He shouted! His voice rose in power but was pitched low and gruff, like a bull's roar, or a lion's, like the pelt he had worn over his armour: he was angry but composed himself before he spoke again.

"Well," he continued after a moment or two, "you can tell anyone who asks you that you've met me. What's more I can show you what we brought back - what I personally came home with. I can show you the pebbles I took from the beach and..." he stood up and lifted his tunic "I can show you the scars I picked up

fighting their cursed warriors in the surf on that first day." There were white lines, rimmed with pink even after all these years, across his right chest where a spear had penetrated under his segmented armour.

"And I can show you this!" he pulled a long bronze dagger with a leaf shaped blade, quite unlike a standard issue pugil, from the top of his boot. "I took this from a chieftain of the Britons after I cut his head clean off!" He stabbed the dagger downwards into the table that the recorder was working at. The man almost jumped out of his seat and his wax tablets slid to the floor. He looked towards me, slightly panic stricken, and delivered an oath under his breath in his native Greek.

"Let me tell you - so you can repeat this to them as asks," he concluded, "that we did land! We did go to Britain forty years ago and the other ships went again the following year and whether it's tomorrow or fifty years from now, we'll go again. To make it our own! When Caesar and the gods will it!"

The old standard bearer sat down heavily, pulling his trophy dagger from the now scarred wooden table.

Do you know, I believed him!



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# The Kitty Drake.

P.B.Freeman

Blood was in the water, lots of it. Dead bodies floated face down and partly submerged, drifting away in the tall ship's wake as the quieter sea reflected the massacre in solemn tribute to the many gallant dead. Among them lay Henry Bowman, his cutlass gripped in his right hand, and only the bloody hilt visible above the waves. His challenge was over, and no-one would ever know where, or 'when' he was lost - especially if the circling tiger sharks were still hungry. Dawn and the Devil knew they'd had their fill over the past few days...

Later, on the Kitty Drake the crew, who'd cheered the fight, were calmer now, eagerly listening to the captain, 'Violet' Jake Shanks, as he strutted about the main deck, smugly victorious once more. Bowman was his last kill. He'd defeated seventeen would-be captains over the past year, and his piercing violet eyes held a familiar raging smile of deep blood-lust. Bowman had been the best, but not better than Shanks himself, though the slashes across the pirate's chest and arms, and especially the one down his left cheek, showed he'd not had it easy. In fact, Shanks' wounds were quite serious, though not life-threatening. Doc Stone-face had already tended his cuts, stitching the worst and smearing the rest with whale-oil.

"Set sail!" Shanks stormed, wiping the trickle of blood from his lips. "Make for Dead Mans' Island! We'll take shelter for the night, we'll plan the next sail - somewhere a bit cooler, and before the sun this time. We need a new challenge, for those who sail here are like old women; they spit and gabble, but scream like tornadoes when blood is spilt. Set new sail, steer into the wind! Grabber - shoot me a shark! Let's feed this straggly crew!"

The ship's first mate knew better than to antagonise Shanks, so he grabbed a harpoon, noting the dried blood on its point from the last shark they'd killed. Glancing at the captain, who was ripping off his blood-soaked shirt and heading to his cabin, the first mate began

belting out more orders to the lackeys, "Get to the shark nets lads, let's set Rose a blood feast she'll never forget. We'll eat on the island - shark fin for all!"

In his cabin, Shanks stared at Rose. She smiled back, her half-naked body as beguiling as ever, her long, black hair flowing down her back, her stark blue eyes almost as piercing as his - they beckoned him, promising to eat him alive. The low-cut dress she was wearing was a more vivid scarlet than the setting sun.

"Where now?" She asked him. "Now Bowman is dead, do we find more likely would-be captains? Or should I ask 'when' now - or have you had your fill of oceans, old man?"

"Just take care." Shanks told her. "Worry about your craft, and let me spill blood. Tomorrow, after we leave Dead Mans' Island you can take us before the sun, and find us new recruits."

"Ones that are better with the cutlass than Henry?"

"Why, do you want me killed? Are you looking for lighter hands?"

"No, I just know how the sport of killing thrills you - to get the better of a man, to run him through, and watch him as he realises he's dying."

"You don't?"

"It's a human trait."

"Yes," Shanks replied coldly, "but you're not human, are you?"

"I'm learning," Rose told him, "now let me get on. I've all sorts of calculations to make, if you want me to be ready for the morning, before the sun...Yes, go - wash off the blood. I'll make preparations to get the ship on the right course...before the sun."

"Take the Drake forward a few years, to a new century - let's see if the hands of men are stronger there, and if their hearts are bolder. Don't let me down, Rose - don't let the Drake die, for she needs mens' blood more, more than any human. Don't fail us, Rose."

"I won't, now go - it sounds like they've caught you a devil-shark." The woman's wry grin quickly developed into a smile. There were sounds above decks, reminiscent of bel-lowing bulls goring a helpless victim, as the shark was landed and clubbed viciously, ready for the feast.

At midnight, Rose-Mary Celeste stood before the portal she'd conjured, watching the hands of the time-crystal she was holding move round to 1800, the year of the new century. She knew that Shanks would be happier now - his appetite for new conquest, ever unsatisfied, would have a different and, hopefully, tougher challenge on the horizon.

As the cabin, then the rest of the ship below-decks lit with a glowing, misty light, Rose felt the skin on her face tighten, her black hair changing colour and her eyes turning to a smouldering brown. Inside her, the alien part of her swooned with delight as the changes in time sated her gnawing hunger, lifting her to a height of pure orgasmic momentum...

"Mornin' captain..." Grabber said, pointing to a tall, gleaming ship with squat masts and many sails. "Look through the spyglass, she's a rare vessel...rigged but not well maned."

Shanks took the glass. "A ship with five masts and men in uniform, by God! It's a war-ship, an Englishman, with soldiers of a King's navy on board. Let's see what she's made of - get closer, Grabber. All hands on deck! Bring the guns to port! Let's see if we can notch us a mast or two!"

"Captain." It was Rose, who had suddenly appeared on deck. "I thought you'd like this."

She handed him a pure white silk sash which he took and draped over his shoulder. Rose

tied it at the back. "Now," she said, "do your worst! Bring the 'Drake' new blood - you can hear her heart beating for it."

"Make sure the cabin is locked," Shanks commanded. "Stay inside till it's over. Protect the ship's soul; I'll take care of the heart."

Shanks watched her walk away, calling after her. "You're.. beautiful, especially in your new guise. Stay in the womb of the ship, let no-one except I call for you."

Rose turned away, the breeze ruffling her long, blonde locks and the smell of salt in her nostrils. A thirst raged inside her that only Shanks could quench, a thirst so intense that even before the first cannon roared it's flame, her alien eyes burned with demon-flame...

Shanks' blade easily sliced through the soldier's tunic, turning white cloth to red, the shock on the man's face complete as the cutlass was pulled clear. The soldier gave a pitiful moan, and keeled forward, pleading for his God to take him. Shanks kicked him back to the deck.

Another soldier pointed a bayonet directly at the pirate's eyes, shouting a crude obscenity as he pulled back the long rifle, ready to fire. Even as the man's thumb pulled back the 'cock' to fire, Shanks laughed and thrust forward, his cutlass slashing the soldier's neck, letting loose a gush of blood from the soldier's slit jugular.

The soldier stared for just a second, then staggered back, dropping his rifle. As the flint-lock hit the deck it fired, sending the iron musket-ball across the deck, slamming into a wounded soldier grovelling on his knees. It caught him in the face, exploding flesh, teeth and part of his jawbone in a bloody mess.

The fight was well on now!

Soldiers were falling like culled sparrows, the warship awash with blood, and the screams of the dying and injured curdled the blue sky and freshening breeze. Shanks' crew were everywhere, their flashing blades catching the full sun. The steel was seeped in crimson and



trailing bits of flesh as they slashed again and again at the beautifully uniformed young men of King George's navy. None were a match for the flaying cutlasses and coiled-bladed daggers of the Kitty Drakes' battle-toughened pirates.

In the rigging and across the yard-arms soldiers were fighting for their lives as their young Captain, Farglass tried bravely to rally his men. Facing two of Shanks' men whilst standing on the wheel-deck he held his ground, beckoning the pirates on, relishing the fight, though aware it was a losing battle.

Farglass dispatched the first pirate, 'One Eye,' with a forward thrust of his sword, the long blade of the sabre penetrating the pirate's chest, slicing through his ribcage and spearing his heart. 'One Eye' chortled, spitting out a mouthful of blood as he fell back.

The second man came at Farglass as he retrieved the sabre with a backward pull, hitting the soldier on the shoulder with swack of his cutlass. The blade hardly bit as Farglass side-stepped just in time, and as he did so he swiped sideways at the pirate known as 'Long Arms', taking off his head at the neck with a single blow. The bald head rolled across the wet, gleaming deck and came to a rest next to the wheel-housing.

Shanks saw Farglass and called out above the melee. "Surrender, Captain! There is no need for you to die so needlessly - we're civilised men, after all!"

Farglass jumped from the wheel-deck, landing awkwardly by the side of several dead soldiers. The raucous sounds of blades bouncing off blades, screams and yells from every direction, the thumping of sailcloth blowing against tall masts, was a mere background of madness to the soldier's new intent. He'd kill Shanks, and hoist the pirate's hide on his bayonet.

"You and me!" Farglass yelled. "You and me - call your men, we'll settle this one-on-one... or are you not up for it, Captain!"

Shanks' eyes shone, the violet in them burning like suns exploding. "STOP!" He yelled at the peak of his lungs. "STOP!" His voice booming

across the ship, everyone heard it and were shaken to cease their craving for blood-shed.

"Take the soldiers prisoner!" Shanks ordered. "Grabber - disarm them and chain them. If the time is right, release them as normal. Grabber, you listening?"

"I heard you captain!"

"Good. Now, Captain Farglass, tell your men to drop their weapons. You have my word - if you are victorious, they'll be set free."

"Your word!" Farglass said dismissively. "The word of a rogue pirate. Since when do men of his majesty's navy take the word of pirates?"

"The bargain is," Shanks beamed, "you defeat me in a contest...to the death, and your men, what's left of them, will be set free to return to this ship. Even with only four masts now, she should still sail fair. What do you say?"

"And what of your men?" Farglass asked, glancing about him as the ship suddenly became quieter, with only the moaning of those dying breaking the restored order. "Will they let us go when you are dead? Well, Captain Shanks - does your word stretch to this, or will we fear a double-cross at the end?"

"If you kill me," Shanks was amused, "your men and you will be set free. Though I warn you - this cutlass has seen off many graceful swords in its time, and yours will fare no better, I promise you. But your men, poor bastards that they are, will not be harmed..."

The Drake was anchored. The noon-day sun hot and unclouded. The warship roped and anchored off the pirate ships' port. Chained to the gunnels the eleven surviving navy personnel, five of whom were badly wounded and bleeding onto the deck, watching sullenly with horror in their hearts as Shanks faced their captain.

Encircling the two men, the pirates, nine of them dead and propped-up against the rails, looked on, awaiting the start of the contest, their cutlasses and pistols at the ready.

Rose was on deck. She offered Farglass some water, which he took and drank hurriedly, then walked over to Shanks. She smiled as she handed him the leather water bottle, her blonde hair just dancing in the breeze, her scarlet dress vividly alluring, the sway of her body sexually provocative. The alien part of her remained well hidden, for now.

Shanks was dressed in black britches and blue shirt, Rose's silk sash across his chest, blood splattered, but still whole. His short black hair was blood-stained, his cutlass mostly blood-red, though untarnished with rust, and it gleamed in patches as the sun shone through the rigging, lighting the blade brilliantly until the raised flag of the 'double-skulls' unfurled more shadow.

Farglass had removed his tunic top and wore a frilled and cuffed white shirt with a stiff, starched collar. His black trousers seemingly unstained, though blood splattered his neck and face. Some droplets were still moist, splashed from his injured left shoulder.

"Ready, Captain?" Shanks asked, feeling the wind ruffle his skin. "It's a fine day, we're on a fine ship, the ocean's calm - so, tell me, what year is it, Captain?"

Farglass looked puzzled. He paced a couple of steps nearer the pirate. "This is the year of our Lord 1800. Why - have you been at sea so long you've lost count of the years?"

"Not exactly." Shanks replied. "Years come, and go - some even run before the sun, some backtrack. You know how it is." Farglass merely stared, shaking his head.

"Grabber!" Shanks called. "Fire your pistol - let's begin!"

The first mate brushed his greasy hair out of his eyes, wiping dirt from his head across his bare chest, mixing it with blood from a long, thin cut, still oozing. "Now, Captain?"

"Now!" Shanks's violet eyes sparkled. "Now - let's not keep time waiting!"

Grabber jumped from the rail where he'd been

sitting and stomped to the centre of the deck raising his pistol. He looked at both men, his eyes wide, his expression almost daring Shanks to laugh. But the captain held his cool, his stare never wavering from the soldier.

The pistol fired, the noise bringing a resounding cheer from the pirates, who raised their swords and shouted out Shanks' name. Even the ship seemed to join in the celebrations.

Farglass lunged forward, his sabre in front of him, Shanks stepped back and then forward aiming his cutlass at the soldier's head, but Farglass blocked the strike by hitting upward with his sabre. The blades clanging together like church bells, echoing across the ship with an eerie resonance, signalling that the contest was well joined!

The two men became locked together, snarling like tiger and lion in the same den, the pirate with a mocking grin and the soldier with determination etched in his eyes. Then they forced each other apart, aiming blows and counter-blows one after the other, reeling backwards from the other's strength and fortitude.

"Well done, Captain." Shanks laughed. "You are a swordsman after all!"

"No!" Farglass retorted. "I'm a soldier in the King's navy - you're a murdering pirate and soon you will die, be it by sword or by the hangman's noose - soon!" Sweat poured from him as he lunged again at Shanks.

The pirate dodged the blow. "Pride is good, Captain." Shanks countered. "But you know the old proverb - pride comes before a fall. Well, this is where you fall! Are you sweating just a bit too much, Captain? Your strength is good - but how is your stamina?!"

Cheers from the watchers rang like klaxons in Farglass' ears, the ship was hot, and he could feel his strength ebbing, but he wasn't about to allow the pirate to fathom his weakness - if he showed this, then he'd surely die.

Shanks was revelling in the fight, the shouts of encouragement from his men like gleeful applause, and the smile on Rose's face like a kiss



from a virgin, as he saw her from the corner of his eye. Her sun-tanned beauty was almost distracting him from the task at hand.

Wielding his cutlass with renewed relish he struck the first, telling blow. The blade struck Farglass on his left arm, blood oozing through the silk fabric as the soldier yelled in surprise. Backing away, breathing deeply, he stood erect. "Is that it?" Farglass mocked. "You have to do better. That was not the blow of a pirate - more of a conscript, I believe..."

For the first time Shanks was angry, he lunged again at the soldier, but this time Captain Farglass was ready, parrying the blow and striking back. His sabre caught his opponent across the waist, causing him to shout alarmingly. "Good!" Shanks said in a kind of mock respect for the soldier. "Well done - the King will be proud of you." His words were lost on the re-invigorated breeze, burning away in the glaring sun, but heard by Rose.

She inhaled deeply - surely this man was not getting the better of Shanks. No way, he'd been cut before, it was only a slight wound, and it would make him more determined than ever to win. She'd seen him fight many times. Shanks would triumph! It would mean that the 'Drake,' the living entity, the soul of the ship would be replenished with new blood.

The fight intensified. Blow met by counter-blow, each thrust parried, every side-swipe blocked, strength pushing against weight, willpower meeting might and fending off the would-be fatal blow.

Until, as a cloud covered the sun, and the breeze mysteriously waned, and silence fell across the Drakes' deck as soldiers and pirates stared in captivation, Shanks saw his one chance and took it with devilish speed.

The cutlass slashed upwards and backwards with terrible force, cutting into the soldier's groin, slicing open his left thigh. He screamed, staggering back, the look of defeat present in his eyes, pain drilling his leg and abdomen. Red-hot needles split muscle and sinew apart as his inner thigh opened and blood spilled through his dark, uniform-trousers.



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Collapsing onto the deck, the sun reappeared as he looked to heaven for a saviour. Farglass nodded to Shanks, tears welling behind saddened blue eyes, sweat dripping like water and pain wracking his whole body. "It seems," he stuttered, "that you send me to my God. I die knowing the hangman's noose awaits you - the gallows is your reward..."

Farglass rolled onto his back and closed his eyes, ready to die. Shanks stood over him, watching, and heard the last breath escaping from his lips. "I hope God accepts you." He said. "Heaven's gate is a long way off - you fought well, so perhaps your God will open his arms for you. Or perhaps the devil will have the last say in your destiny..."

That evening in the cabin Rose sat at the table, as she and Shanks ate. "It's been half a day now, no sign of the King's navy in pursuit."

She looked at Shanks waiting for a curt reply, none came so she said, "Is it time to go on?"

"Yes." Shanks agreed. "Farglass was the best yet, still, I'm sure somewhere out there, someone even better is waiting. I feel the urge to fight, I always need to fight. "

"The crew are well fed." Rose told him. "We took most of the supplies from the navy ship, but there's a restlessness among them. The rum's nearly gone, the salt beef is tasting bitter and the breadfruit's mouldy."

"Where, I mean when, do you think we should go?" Shanks swallowed the last piece of breadfruit, washing it down with more ale from his tankard. "Forward or backwards? What do you think, Rose - what does the woman inside you tell you now?"

"Forward." Rose answered, "Through the years to about 1870, seventy years on."

"Why then?" Shanks wanted to know.

"The date has jumped into my head," Rose told him, "I don't know why," she lied. "Are you okay to sail seventy-eight years into the future, regardless of whatever may be waiting?"

"Why not?" Shanks smiled finishing his ale. "Let's hope we meet plenty of ships - we must replace the crew we lost. They were good men all, fighters with the spirit of demons."

"Nine dead, wasn't it?" Rose nodded. "Those soldier boys could fight. They killed 'Rasper,' and 'Eight-fingers', and their captain even took-out poor 'One-Eye'."

"Long Arms too," Shanks reminded her. "His head cut clean off by Farglass. Instant decapitation - well, it is better than hanging, which is what he believed would be his fate."

"Go up on deck." Rose said. "Strut about in your new clothes, it makes the crew feel good to see you. Tell them we're about to bring forth another portal. Make sure the sails are set and everyone's ready, we don't want anyone flying overboard."

Leaving the cabin, Shanks climbed onto the deck. The crew were there, lazing about, drinking rum and generally causing fuss, arguing and tempting one another into silly fights over possessions and booty. The blood was dry on their cutlasses, their blood-lust idling for a while.

"Man your stations!" Shanks shouted. "A portal is being located, so take care and hold fast onto what you can. Stow the rum-barrels and shade your eyes - make ready!"

Just then the breeze grew stronger and the clear blue sky dulled and sank into grey. The crew knew what to do, obeying their captain's commands without hesitation.

Grey sky flecked with white squalls and mist smeared the deck, a resonating chill shook with ice particles while the lower cabin exhaled a long, droning cry. Bright light quickly engulfed the entire ship, with the sails shaking and masts creaking, and then brightness slowly extinguished to deep black, as if night had marooned day and stolen the sun.

Moments later, as the mist cleared, Shanks again felt the sun on his face and the ocean wind furling the sails, heard the sounds of waves rolling along the bow of the Drake. "Ship - captain, a tall ship!" Grabber shouted. "There off the starboard bow, she's a real beauty. A two-masted brigantine with few hands on deck - there, they see us!"

"Can you see what she's been christened, Grabber - can you make out her name?"

"Yes, Captain. Here, use my eye-glass. She's a sleek lady...the 'Mary Celeste' is her name."

















# Community

## Meet the Irregulars

**Name:** I'm Konrad Sontag

**Occupation:** I'm currently a third year Aerospace/Mechanical engineering student at the University at Buffalo. A lot of mathematical modelling and fun involved with the homework, but we have a pretty fun hands-on materials testing lab this semester. Break stuff, for science!

**Age:** I am twenty years old right now, but only for a few more months.

**Location:** I live in Buffalo, NY USA

**Years gaming:** I played on and off since about five years ago, but I've really been playing regularly only for a year and a half now.

**Years painting:** Painting? Well, that I've been doing for 12 years or so. Got my first snap-tite model when I was about 8. It's just been going on since then, so much to do so little time.

**Gamer or painter?** I'd say that I am primarily a painter - I enjoy working on all sorts of scale models. I used to paint a lot of 1/72 WWII aircraft and armour, I've moved more towards GW models and 1/35 modern armour. The fact that you get to send your armies into battle is

a great bonus for me though.

**Current army - and for what game?** My current army is Imperial Guard for Warhammer 40k. I have about 2500 points worth of tanks, infantry, some of everything really. It's a mixed bunch, Cadian, Steel Legion, and Vostroyans all in one army. One thing's for sure - Guard armies will really help keep your work slate full.

**Current modelling/painting project?** My current project is a diorama I'm planning out with a 1/35 Trumpeter LAV-25 and some scale figures. It's going to be my first time working with an etched brass detailing kit, so it will probably be a nice challenge and change of pace from my Citadel minis.

**Favourite painting challenge?** My favourite painting challenge is probably weathering up models, be it with paints or pigments. It's just so fun to make stuff look beat up and battle worn.

**What's next?** Well, I'll probably build some new wargaming terrain and continue painting my Imperial Guard. That will keep me busy for some time.



**Name:** Krystian Krawczynski

**Occupation:** Civil engineer - sub-discipline :  
Environmental engineer

**Age:** 27

**Location:** Crewe, Cheshire, UK or Olsztyn, woj. Warminsko-Mazurskie, Poland

**Years gaming:** Two, maybe three. Why so few? It's simple, right now I'm living in a small town - Crewe, in the UK - and not many of my friends know exactly what Warhammer 40k is.

I will never forget my first battle - I lost to a 14 year old girl! YES I lost my first battle to a small, sweet, cute-looking GIRL! To this day it's an embarrassing memory for me. I'm still practising and I get a lot of joy when I'm winning against somebody! Flash forward to my last holiday in Poland in October 2009, where I took part in a private gaming tournament in which there were about ten players. I took Best Painted with my Ultramarines but also took fourth overall. What? I wasn't third from last? I went to a tournament where there were a lot of my friends who are awesome players and win games.

The truth of it is that had my buddy Tomek not stuck it to me in game three, I could have won the whole thing (OK, I couldn't - I'm still a rubbish gamer). We all have a thousand of those stories I know, but the fact that I could have actually won stuck with me and grated on me! My painting is what pushed me into the upper reaches of the tournament. I was one of, if not the only guy to score maximum points for painting. I realized that with good painting, decent playing and a little luck, I could compete for the whole shebang, especially since most guys who go to tournaments are of the Paint to Play mentality (getting some gaming quality painted models on the table so they can play their army).

**Years painting:** 10 years. To this day I remember when I got my hands on my first Space Marine model! When I got into 40k ten years ago I was not very good at painting. There were no decent tutorials on how to exactly paint Space Marines and the GW instructions were

written along the same lines as instructions on how to assemble a book case. To this day this is still the same. I struggled through by trial and error and my first Ultramarine just didn't look good. I, like probably 80% of guys and girls who try the hobby, gave up on painting and just focused on learning how to play. I bought a bunch of poorly painted old rubbish Space Marines on eBay and used them on the tables. But then I decided to focus on painting. I got some high quality brushes, practised my technique on my rubbish models and actually developed some skill. The first model I painted that I was proud of, which is horrible by my current standards, was the Terminator Captain and I still have him! He was mostly Regal Blue and looked like a member of the Crimson Fists. I had no clue that I had used the Crimson Fists colour scheme until my friend pointed it out to me. I started truly looking at models online and started to see the level of detail that was possible and what I could do.



The point of that is that just about any colour scheme that works well has already been done. As a beginner, don't try to reinvent the wheel and make up your own scheme. Pick an established scheme that you like and go with it, like I did when I finished the captain that looked like a Crimson Fist. I used what had already been done and I made it my own. Then the new SM codex came out. I started using Ultramarine Blue and then my current level of painting was born. I came in with some more models, much improved, and showed them to my friends again. I told them I was looking at the Golden Daemon stuff in White Dwarf for inspiration. Not long after, I won my first of several Best Painted awards including the Sheffield Irregulars Merit award. Now I am flattered to say I am considered a 'Pro' and guide dozens of people in their own painting!

**Gamer or painter?** I'm totally a PAINTER! I ask you the question - do you paint to play or play to paint? If you want to win tournaments, you need to focus on both painting and playing. If you look at all of the Best Overall winners, they not only crush their opponents, but their armies are beautiful. Sometimes guys are just so good that painting doesn't matter, but they still have at least good looking armies so as not to lose points.

**Current army - and for what game?** The current army I'm playing and still making bigger and bigger is 22,000 points of the 2nd Ultramarines Company, suitable for Apocalypse size games.

**Current modelling/painting project?** I am currently working on Blood Angels, Dark Angels, Black Templars and Ultramarines - all my beloved Space Marines - and soon I'll start on a Tau drone army.

**Favourite painting challenge?** I enjoyed the 'Fly the Flag' competition and last December the 'Silent Night' competition which I put my miniature in for. Every model I'm painting is a BIG challenge for me because I want to make them unique!

**What's next?** Ultramarines Dreadnought Army. Soon I'll do the other Ultramarines Captains, 2nd Company Ultramarines Banner and some SM characters.



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# Interview with Mike McVey

For our readers who are new to the hobby and may not know your name, could you briefly introduce yourself?

I've been working in the miniatures industry for quite a long time now - Games Workshop initially employed me as a miniatures painter in 1987 at the tender age of 18. That was in the original Design Studio in Nottingham and was the year that Rogue Trader launched. I went on to work there for over 12 years, finally leaving in December of 1999 - in that time I had quite a few different jobs, but they were all based firmly around painting and making miniatures. I ran the original 'Eavy Metal team for a few years, wrote a series of painting and modelling guide books, spent a year or so doing nothing but making dioramas, trained to be a miniatures designer, and finally working on designing some of the GW miniature ranges. I left GW (on very good terms) to move to the US and work for Wizards of the Coast in Seattle. I was the Art Director for all the miniatures ranges at Wizards, and in many ways that experience has shaped who I am professionally now - I Art Directed the Chainmail - if you haven't heard of it, don't ask! - metal line, and the D&D and Star Wars pre-painted lines. For the last year of working there I was also getting involved with Privateer Press - PP was already in existence when I joined, but only in so far as they had published a couple of little D&D adventures - so really that's when it all kicked off properly. I was the Miniatures Director at PP until I left in February 2007 to go freelance. We - my wife Alison, myself and our three month old son, Cal - left the US in May of that year and came back to the UK. Since then I have been involved with quite a few different projects - including working pretty intensively on the World of Warcraft miniatures line for Upper Deck for a year or so, then latterly on getting the Studio McVey miniatures line going mid way through last year.

When did you first start painting?

I have very strong memories of starting to paint miniatures - it was on a family holiday to Devon in the early 1980's, I would have to check the exact year but I would have thought



it would have been about '81 or '82. My brother and I had been to London for a day trip and found a games shop on Oxford Street that sold miniatures - I can still remember being absolutely amazed looking at all these little men and monsters lined up in a glass cabinet! We both bought some, and the next day found a model shop that sold Humbrol Enamel paints. I still have the first miniature I painted. It was an old Ral Partha caveman, but I thought it was a troll and painted it green with purple hair. That miniature was the start of a life long obsession.

You have also over the years designed several miniatures, which ones stand out the most?

I've actually designed quite a lot of miniatures, and some stand out for different reasons! My sculpting output at GW was quite up and down - there is some truly dreadful stuff I wish they'd never released, but also some things I made just before I left which are pretty good and still stand up well now. The miniature I took the most stick for was Lemartes, the Blood Angel character - and it really is pretty terrible! I just wasn't ready



to be making miniatures of that type - I was a pretty good technical sculptor, but my skills as a designer hadn't developed enough. I was trained for about a year - which was nowhere near long enough - and then unleashed on the main GW ranges. GW always used to let the individual sculptor design the miniature - we were never given concepts to follow. While this was okay for people like Jes Goodwin - who did meticulous concept work for every miniature before he started - but I just didn't have those skills. In some cases that was painfully obvious. GW should never have released those miniatures - but they had release schedules to follow, so out they went! I still think the work I did for the Eldar range is pretty strong though - I made a Farseer, a Warlock, Dark Reapers (since re-designed) and the Swooping Hawks, which are in the current range. I'm still pretty proud of the Exarchs for both of those ranges.

**You've worked with some big names in the business - what do you look back on fondly from working with Games Workshop and Privateer Press?**

The happiest time in my whole career was the year or so I spent making dioramas for GW - it really was great to be paid (though not a great deal) to do what I enjoyed the most. I didn't really have a boss at that time so people largely left me to do exactly what I wanted, and as a consequence of that I produced what I think is a pretty strong body of work. The first piece was The Emperor and Horus diorama - I

had actually converted and painted the miniatures a few years before I made the diorama, right at the time Adrian Smith drew the fantastic artwork it was based on. I had no experience of making dioramas before that - so I had to learn on the job, but it was just great fun and taught me a lot of things I still use in my work today. After that came the Wood Elf and undead battle, Warhammer Quest, Lustria, a small assassin piece, and a really quick Space Hulk diorama for the sides of the box. I have pictures on some of them up on my website, but they are only quite small - one of these days I will get some larger images on the blog and maybe do some retrospective how-to articles.

**What was your involvement with Warmachine whilst working at Privateer Press?**

I was the Miniatures Director for PP, so was responsible for the entire sculpting and painting output. I had nothing to do with Warmachine the game - I tried to get involved with it in the early stages of design and play test, but it just didn't interest me at all.







### Do you attend Games Day any more?

I haven't been back to Games Day since I left in '99 - but I would really love to. Ali and I talk about getting it together to enter Golden Demon one year - and I think sooner or later we will actually do it. The trouble is the time involved in getting an entry together - I don't think there's any point doing it unless you give it a good shot. Don't get me wrong - my aim wouldn't be to win the Sword, I don't think my painting is at a level where that would be a realistic aim any more - things have just moved on too much, and I don't have the time that would require. Still, I wouldn't want to go there and embarrass myself, so I would have to do something I could be proud of. I'd also love to see the process from the other side of the desk - I went to every Golden Demon between the first one in 1987 and the one shortly before I left in 1999, so it would be great to experience it from the perspective of the painter.

### What was involved in developing the paint ranges at both companies?

I have worked on quite a few different paint ranges in my career. The old GW one, the new GW one, two other ranges with different suppliers for GW which never saw the light of day, one for Wizards that was never released. and the one for PP. The one which required the most work is the one GW currently sell - though not the foundation paints, as they came later - as I working on that one from scratch. I spent lots of time in the development lab for that one. The old GW range was already formulated when I got there, I just tweaked it and re-designed and ordered the colours in a painter friendly way. The PP range is basically exactly the same at the old GW range, and a couple of other ranges as well - Wargames Foundry and Cote D'Arms, so that wasn't a great deal of work. Just colour choice really.

### Do you game at all? If so, what do you enjoy playing?

I'm not a gamer at all really - I played a little Warhammer while at GW, and had quite a large Wood Elf army for a while. I never once played 40K though. I got into the hobby though playing D&D, which I loved in my early teens, but soon realized I liked painting the miniatures



more than playing the game. I have played a few board games - Settlers of Catan for example, that I have enjoyed, but we just never seem to have time for things like that.

**Do you consider yourself a sculptor or a painter?**

I'm not sure I consider myself either really! I've made my living from each one of them in the past - but it's been quite a while since either one of them could be considered my primary employment. I think painting will always be closer to my heart - it's where I started, and it's the only one of the two I have done in the past few years. I've actually enjoyed painting more since I came home from the US then I have for a long time. I'm still not at the point where I am totally happy with the results - but there again, what painter is? - but I think I am turning out some okay pieces.

**What prompted you to set up Studio McVey?**

Love of miniatures. For the past ten years I have Art Directed hundreds of sculpts, and worked with some of the best artists in the business - when we came home to the UK it seemed only natural to carry on doing that. When we set up Studio McVey, the main aim was to produce the best possible miniatures we could, and more importantly, miniatures

that people would want to paint.

**Has the process of setting up your own miniatures company been a smooth one?**

No! I think I had a bit of a head start on most people who set up their own miniatures lines - I've been in the business long enough to know a lot of people and understand how the process works. It's still tough though - and I think especially so for what we are trying to do. We don't have a game to hide behind that drives sales - every miniature we release has to stand on its own merits. It can be a situation that people will buy a dodgy miniature just because it fills a certain role in a game system. That just doesn't work for us - if we put out a weak miniature people won't buy it.

**What can we expect from Studio McVey during 2010?**

More miniatures. We will continue to grow and expand the Limited Edition resin line, but we also plan to start a non-limited range of miniatures some time this year. It's in development now but I don't want to talk too much about it yet - we're pretty excited about it though. Hopefully you can also expect the same focus on quality that we have shown on the releases so far.





Whilst working at Games Workshop and Privateer Press you helped to develop the paint system for both, do you have any plans to release a line of paints through Studio McVey?

I've thought about this quite a lot in the last few years, but I doubt you will see a Studio McVey paint line any time soon. The market is pretty saturated right now - so unless I can think of a gap that we could fill, I'll probably leave it alone for a while. Never say never though.

Who has the messier painting desk/space, you or Ali?

I couldn't possibly answer that on the grounds I might incriminate my wife.

Where do you see the hobby going over the next few years?

That's a big question! 'The hobby' is such a large and sprawling thing it's hard to give it an answer with any real meaning.

I think technology and plastics are going to drive things forward more than ever for a certain part of the industry. I see some parallels with the way the publishing industry was



affected by the arrival of desk-top publishing in the early nineties. Suddenly huge typesetting machines were replaced with Apple Macs and it was far easier and cheaper to design a magazine - but not one that looked any good. It just put the technology into the hands of people who didn't really know how to use it. Almost overnight there were terrible looking magazines all over the shelves. It's a little like that with new plastics processes and digital sculpting at the moment - we're still in a learning phase. There are some really good results starting to emerge, but there is also some absolute dross. It all comes down to the skill of the sculptor, regardless of whether they are traditional or digital - and how well they understand the process. Sculpting in 3D is just like sculpting with greenstuff or fimo - it's just a different medium.

The plastics process is also getting better and cheaper - and it's also not subjected to the fluctuations in raw materials in the way that metal miniatures are. That has a great appeal to gaming companies who want to produce large quantities of miniatures.





Conversely, It's also far easier than it's ever been for small companies to enter the market - the internet has allowed miniatures companies to get a foot hold in a way that would have been impossible not that long ago. At one point the only routes a new company could take were either to try and get their products into distribution and retail - or to have a mail order business that relied on advertising in the back of magazines. Both are tough things to do successfully. These days all you have to do it set up a website - hit a few news sites and forums, and your stuff is already reaching a large audience. How well it does after that is down to how good your products - or prices - are.

I think the quality of miniatures is going to continue to go up - the more choice there is in the market place, the more discerning the consumers are going to get. That has to be a good thing for the consumer - and hopefully for the industry as a whole.

It's an exciting time to be involved.

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# Artist Showcase with Ricardo Guimaraes

Could you tell us a little about yourself as way on an introduction?

I'm a 34 year old Brazilian illustrator. I have a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts and I've been a teacher for ten years. Nowadays I don't teach any more as I work as a full time illustrator and concept artist at a local Game and Software company. Oh, and I don't sleep much!

How does your traditional art training affect your digital painting?

Well, there are certain aspects of the development of a painting that can only be explored to their full extent if you know how to paint traditionally. There are plastic solutions in a composition, such as impastos (thick paint), that help improve the final surface of the painting. As digital tools are very well developed emulating the natural media aspects, you can benefit a lot having a traditional background, for these effects show up in the final result.

There is the "softness factor" also, as digital artists tend to rely solely on the blur tools and the like to soften the transitions between areas of the painting.

If you know how to do it well with paint, it will make a whole world of difference in the final look, which will have a much less "airbrushed" feel to it.

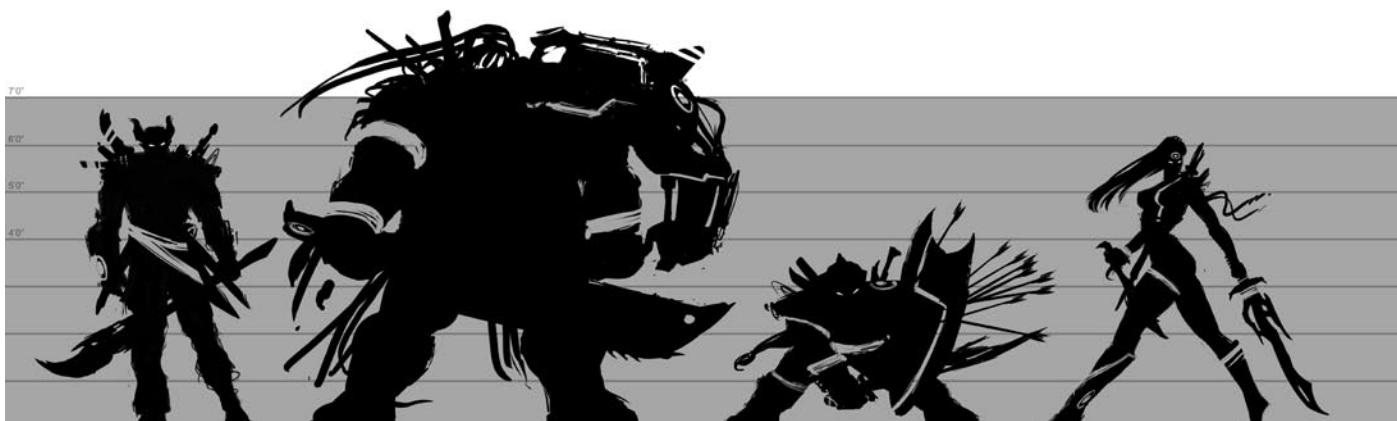
What tools and techniques do you use on a regular basis?

I use a Wacom Intuos 3 on my PC with two 19" monitors. I work mostly with Photoshop CS4, Art Rage 2.5 and I use 3D whenever I feel necessary. The basic work-flow is to start with pencil drawings - lots of them - which I either then scan on to my computer, or just use them as reference material and work directly on Photoshop or Art Rage. Usually I lay a base on Art Rage, just establishing the main colours and the mood of the painting, then I switch to Photoshop and gradually build the paint using several layers, as with oil painting. When I think it's developed enough, I go back to Art Rage for final painting touches. But this process varies a lot. Actually, I almost never use the very same process on more than one painting.

What you do prefer, character or location?

Characters, and locations, and locations with characters!





The cover for issue 3 has a very hand drawn feel to parts of it, what process did you use?

I first did a couple of pencil drawings, scanned the one I felt that captured the mood I wanted and began the painting on Photoshop, first establishing the coldness for the scene. It helped to set the colour scheme for the painting, which I followed all the way up to the end. Sometimes I go for a looser rendering, but on this specific illustration I tried for a very detailed depiction of the character, which I thought would add to the storytelling. To finish the illustration I added a couple of effects with some custom brushes I did and also overlaid a few hand drawn textures.

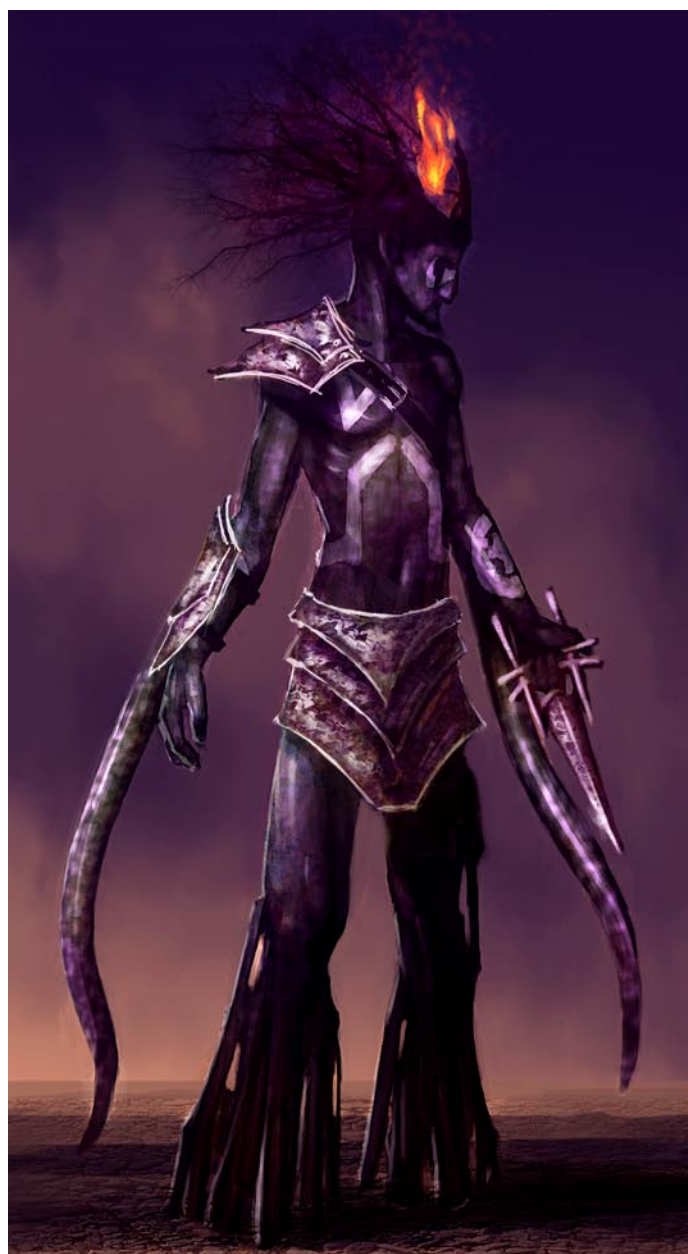
How did you find working on the cover for our Undead special, and what was your inspiration?

I just loved it! As the edition's theme was "Undead", which is a pretty broad subject, I started doodling lots of Undead ideas, trying not to limit myself at this early stage with any kind of specific undead. So mummies, warriors, vampires, zombies and who knows what else, came out of my pencil drawings in search for a good composition.

Since the earlier covers somehow reflected the seasons in which the magazine was published, I settled for a winter, snowy scene, after a suggestion from Becky. Trying to find inspiration for the character's back-story, I searched about "Otzi the Iceman", a well-preserved natural mummy of a man from about 3300 BC. The mummy was found in September 1991 in the in the Ötztal Alps, near the border between Austria and Italy. The nickname comes from Ötztal (Ötz valley), the region in which he was discovered. Some of the items found

with the Iceman were a copper axe with a yew handle, a flint knife with an ash handle, a quiver of 14 arrows with viburnum and dog-wood shafts.

There was also an unfinished yew longbow that was 1.82 meters (72 in) long. Click [here](#) for more information on Otzi.









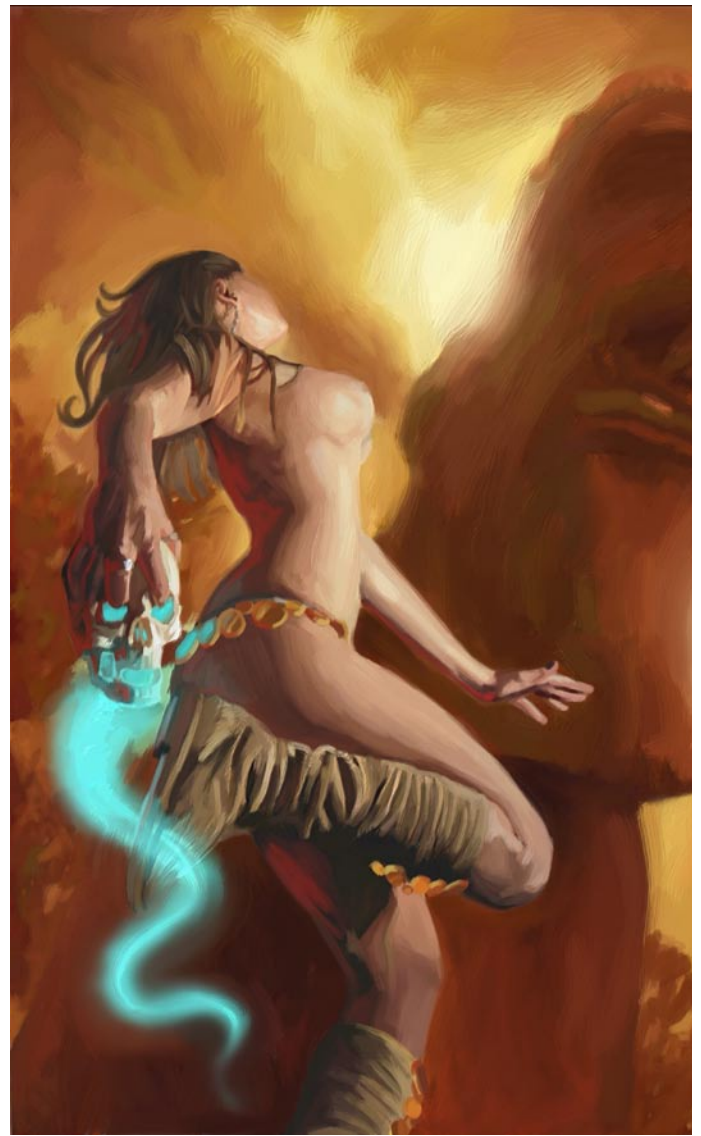
I wasn't going for anything historical for my image but the idea of frozen, fully armed mummies sounded cool enough in my head to try for something in this direction, so I came up with an initial drawing of a warrior skeleton wandering through a snowy mountain. I then decided to give him an armour and a few more aggressive weapons (on the first idea he had only a long sword). After the compositional rough was approved I started to paint right away....

Where do you get inspiration from?

Everywhere. I'm a very permeable kind of person in regards to inspiration and influences. From music to movies, to other artists' works, I look at virtually everything in search for inspiration when I'm at the beginning of a painting.

Your work is predominantly sci-fi and fantasy, are there any other subjects that attract you?

Not really. I tried some everyday life and humour illustration (very influenced by Norman Rockwell and J.C. Leyendecker paintings) in the past, but I didn't find my own voice on it.





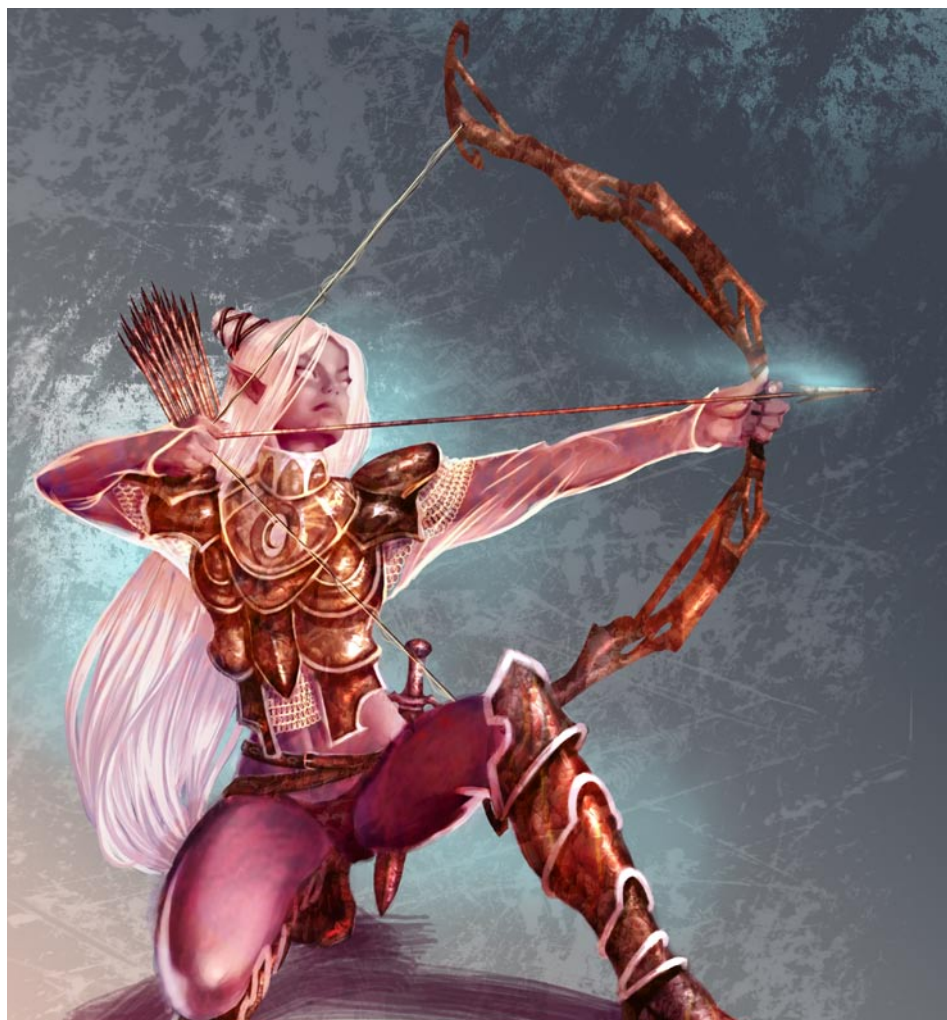


Are you a gamer or a miniature figure painter?

No, not really. I love games, but I'm so addicted to it that if I play for some time I don't do anything else, and well, I gotta pay my bills, ha-ha..

If you could produce a piece of art for someone, who would it be?

There are a lot of people I'd love to produce work for. LucasArts and Wizards of the Coast to name a few are among the top.









# Interview with Andy Remic

## When did you first start writing?

I wrote my first book when I was about 7. It was called *The Four Headed Monster*, and had a picture on the front of a four headed monster, King Kong style, being attacked by fighter jets. My teacher thought it was cool, and I carried on writing from that point. My first serious novel attempt, for the benefit of my friends in the pub when I was 17 (\*cough\*), was called *SILKWORM*, a comedy fantasy about Moronik the Barbarian, Pipkin the Wizard, and Spud the Gnome. It kind of snowballed from that point. That's what happens when you're doing A levels.

## Your books generally fall within the Sci-Fi & Fantasy genre, do you plan to write within any other genre in the future?

I see myself as a writer, and there's lots of horror and black comedy in my labelled SF and Fantasy works. Recently I've got into film-making, and so I'm working on short film and feature scripts at the moment, alongside my fiction. You can see my short horror film *CHEMICAL MAN* here.

## Are you a gamer? If so, what do you play?

Oh yes. I remember the *Monster 3D* card, and the first time I saw *QUAKE* in 3D. My mate and I networked that, listening to *Clawfinger* and *New Model Army*, fragging, eating donuts and drinking beer. All the *Quake* and *Medal of Honour* games were high on our networking list, alongside the *Red Alert* games. Once, we'd been playing for about 4 hours, built up mammoth bases with tanks and MIGs, and then went down for a chilli my wife cooked for dinner. All the time we were eating, we could hear in beautiful female dulcet tones, "Your base is under attack" and we kept eating faster and faster and faster. Haha. Suffice to say, I won. I was the *QUAKEMASTER*.

I'm also a big fan of the *Half Life* games, *Unreal Tournament* and *Bioshock*, that sort of thing. Although more recently, having 2 little boys, *Lego Star Wars* has been high on the playlist.



## Have you been approached by anyone looking to option any of your books into films?

I had some early interest from Paramount and Impact Pictures on the first three books (*Spiral*, *Quake* and *Warhead*), but it just stagnates and goes o---n..... f o r..... ---- e v e r .... My agent said just sit back, and if it happens it happens. That's if I don't make something myself first!! Check out Grunge Films for more information.

## Which book would you most like to see on the silver screen and why?

Hmm. Probably *BIOHELL*, because I'm a big zombie fan, and *BIOHELL* is my uber-comedy zombie kickass white-knuckle action thriller adventure story. With zombies. Did I mention it had zombies?

## What type of books do you read yourself?

Anything from mainstream, SF, fantasy, horror, and Bill Bryson's travel books. He's a real funny dude. In genre fiction, I'm a fan of Iain M. Banks, David Gemmell, Joe Abercrombie - I could go on for a week...

When you get writers block, if at all, what do you do to over come the problem?

Never happens. Watch. It'll happen tomorrow, now.

How do you approach a new book, what do you normally start with?

I put down a skeleton plot, devise the characters, then do a chapter plan until 2/3rds of the way through. Having said that, each book can be triggered by something different - a plot idea, a character, something you see on the news. So it depends, really.

What advice could you give some one considering writing a book for the first time?

Plan it out. Pace yourself - so a few thousands words a week. Don't give up. Omit needless words. I still remember what it felt like to be unpublished - I thought I'd never get a deal. Honestly. It took me about 10 years, just like many other popular authors you read today. Now that's stubbornness!!



Now for some bizarre questions from our readers

From Brett

Do you think a genetically enhanced mon-goose/peregrine falcon hybrid could be the answer for helping seek out insurgents in Afghanistan?

I think it would take a miracle to seek out insurgents in Afghanistan. After all, they're fighting for their homeland. Maybe if the mongoose/falcon had the same tenacity as those pesky Transformers, you might get somewhere...

From Ian

If there was no such thing as cheese, what would you have on your crackers after a nice meal?

I'd love a slice of your raw kidneys, with a fine Chianti - chhh chh slurping noises and evil cackling follows.

From Dave

Red, Brown or neither on Bacon & Sausage sandwiches?

That would be brown. My uncle was in King's Regiment, and got me into horrible sauces on army butties at a young and impressionable age.

If you had to go back in time which period would you go back to and why?

Good question - I think, possibly, Elizabethan England so I could meet Edmund Blackadder. He was real, wasn't he? I flunked History BIG STYLE.

Who do you think would win in a fight, Homer Simpson or Peter Griffin?

Homer! Homer!! Homer!!!





## Painting Faces

David Heathfield (Aka; Mr.Scream)

In this article I hope to give some basic ideas about painting flesh by concentrating on the most important part of the model, the face.

As everyone knows the face is the part of the model that your eye is drawn to first, and it is said by pretty much every painter worth his salt that a badly painted face equals a badly painted model. This is true to a certain degree as no matter how well painted the rest of the model is, if the focal point of the face is rubbish then half of your audience will not bother to look at the rest.

So what makes a good face? Like other areas it should be clean, neat and well blended, with a good amount of contrast but there a few other factors you need to include when painting flesh.

Skin is semi translucent and so when you look at skin you're not just seeing the top layer, you're also seeing the veins and blood supply underneath, along with muscles and ligaments. When we are ill - self-inflicted or not - our skin turns pale as the blood supply is not as effective as when we are at our peak; if you do something strenuous then you end up flushed

and if you drink lots of cider you get a red nose ;) It all effects the colour and pigments you see when you look at someone's face.

To capture this you can use glazes of colour to achieve different effects. I won't go into the technique too much as all these subjects have been covered in depth in many articles before. If you find a term that you're not familiar with then you shouldn't have too much trouble finding it on Google or CoolMiniOrNot.

So to begin with you're going to need to base your model. I have used grey as my primer, I sometimes use light grey for best results but this colour is better for photographing and gives more obvious results for the purpose of the tutorial. White works well too, but I find that light grey gives a more realistic finish and tone to the model. Remember that when you apply thin layers of paint they are semi translucent and so the undercoat will have an effect on the final finish. It's this idea that we are going to use to create the translucent layers of the skin.



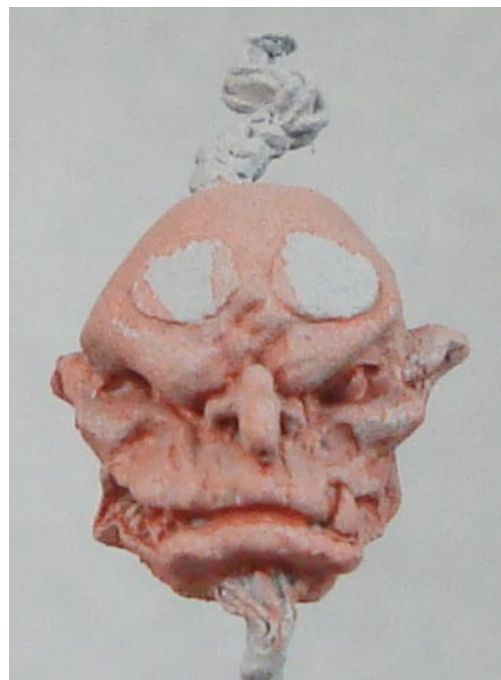
Stage 1

In this first picture you can see the paint on my wet palette. It's thin enough to need to be applied several times to achieve an opaque finish which is what you want for each colour. Assume for the purpose of the tutorial that I apply all my colours this way.



Stage 2

With the model base coated a quick picture under a lamp gives me the general areas of light and dark to work on. After a while you will just know where to shade and highlight but this is a great technique to use just to check.



Stage 3

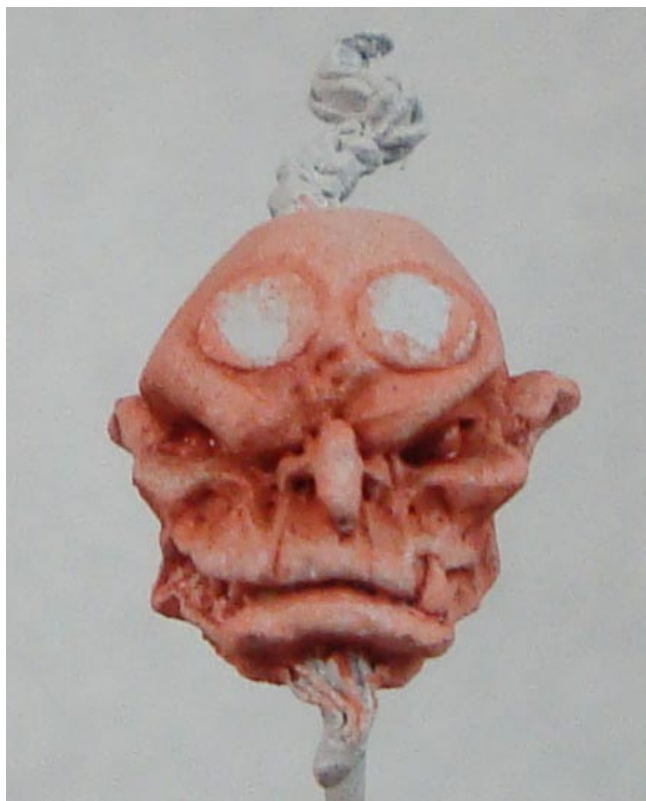
Here you can see my first coat. This shows how thin the paint is and should be. Apply the paint carefully and evenly and work it toward the darker areas with each coat leaving the lighter areas to make blending easier later on. This also has an effect on the colour of each layer afterwards and is one of the ways that you can create natural differences in the tone of the skin.



Stage 4

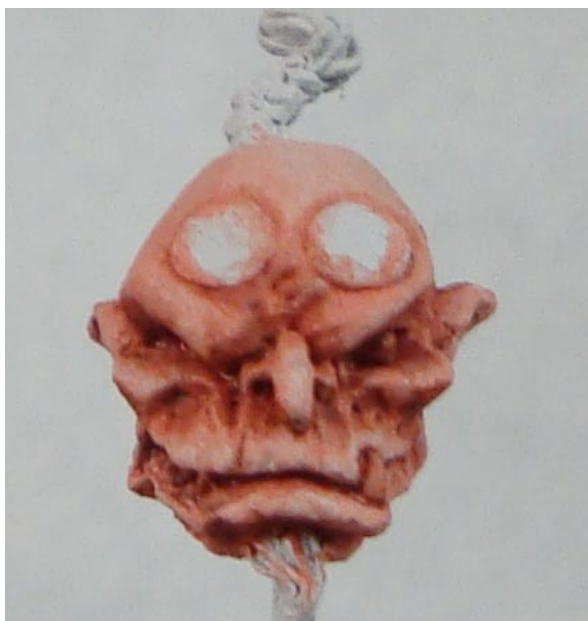
Remember that skin is not perfect, it has many imperfections and blemishes and you want to aim to capture that with your painting.





Stage 5

Now sticking to the shaded areas I apply the first of the darker colours. This is a generic reddy brown without too much colour either way. Keeping your colours quite simple at this stage allows you to do more with glazes later.



Stage 6

Here I have taken the shading further using a darker brown and then finally black lining the eyes and mouth. Black lining areas makes them really stand out separately from the rest of the model.



Stage 7

Reapplying the base colour slightly smooths in the darker colours. Then it's time to apply the first highlight, in this case a mid tone that covers most of the face and acts as a colour that joins the darker base and lighter highlight shade together.



Stage 8

Another highlight and we are ready to start adding some colour. You don't want to highlight too far before adding glazes as the lighter highlights will make the glazes particularly vivid and so applying them at this point over an intermediate colour makes them look more natural. You can also work back on top of the glazes creating the translucent effect which is so important.



Stage 9

For the glazes I have chosen tones of purple and red, and concentrated them around areas where this skin would be thinnest or have a particularly good blood supply, such as around the cheekbones and eyes. Also I added red to the nose and purple to the ears to create the effect that the model is cold or had been at a bottle of cider. I also added some further shade to certain areas that needed it. For this I added a little dark blue to my dark brown shade.



Stage 10

Reapply your highlight slightly leaving areas of colour in between.



Stage 11

Now to push those highlights and create some definition. When you have a particularly character full face with lots of lines and creases in this needs to be shown and picked out. You can use an even lighter skin tone or add white to your highlight colour and simply paint on inter-connecting lines where the creases and folds of the face form.



At this stage I also pick out details such as the eyes and teeth. Eyes are painted black then lined white. A dot of black in the middle of the white line usually suffices but you can go further and add another fine reflection of white in the top corner as you would with a gem or fine stone.



## Stage 12

Finally I tidied up some areas, added an extra glaze of colour to the areas I wanted to be more vivid and then applied fine points of white to the very edges of the lightest highlights. This adds even more to those character lines and makes them crisp and easily readable to the person looking at the model.

Obviously there are other ways to paint faces, you may start with a black undercoat and work up or pre shade the whole face before painting it. Either way you are aiming to create depth and realism giving that translucent effect.

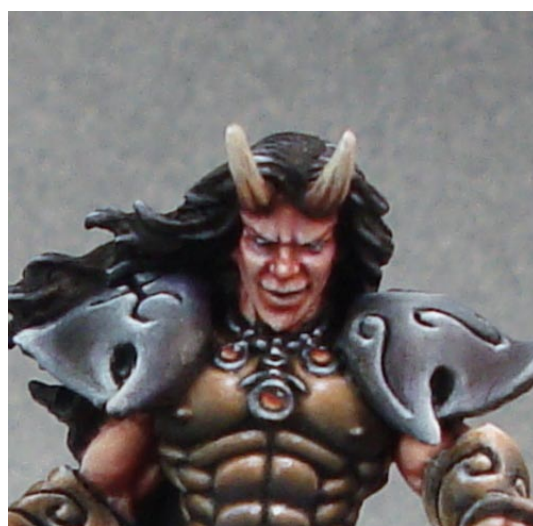


## Orc Example

Here is a picture of an Orc using the same technique. It shows how you can use the same principles but vary the colours used. Below are even more examples of skin using different techniques and colours but always aiming to create that translucent feel.

Colours used < = shade > = highlight  
 Base = Tanned Flesh (GW) < Beastly Flesh (Rackham) < Scorched Brown (GW) > Tanned Flesh (GW) > Dwarf Flesh (GW) > Elf Flesh (GW)  
 + Glazes of Divine Purple (Rackham,) Arcavia Red (Rackham), Scab Red (GW) > Elf Flesh (GW) > Light Flesh (Vallejo) > White (Vallejo)







# Photo Buildings Made Easy

Steve J

In response to the many kind folk who have admired the buildings used in the last Sussex Aflame game, here is a quick guide on how to do them.

First take photos of the building you wish to build, in this case my house



Import the photos onto your PC. You will now need Publisher, Photoshop or similar programme.



Scaling is fairly easy as Publisher or any image manipulation programme will have rulers on the top and side of your workspace. A 28mm figure needs a doorway roughly 32mm high, so reduce or enlarge the photo to suit. The same procedure can be used for any scale figures.

Using cropping and cut and paste, get rid of modern things like wheely bins, excessive foliage, etc.

Top left - the original.

Top right - the conservatory half deleted.

Bottom row - the finished picture



Once you've finished manipulating the images, print them out at as high a quality as possible. Stick them to 5mm foamboard using spray-mount and assemble your building.



Cut out firing positions, and add firesteps, as shown above:



Any exposed foamboard is covered with printed patches, foliage is added to give a 3D effect and to cover any mistakes, and a roof is added.

I made a half timbered version at the same time using the Shapes facility.



Hope this is of use, now I expect to see a lot of local buildings in future battle reports.





# Reviews

## Victory At Sea by Mongoose Publishing

Dave Barker

When I was asked to review the Victory At Sea rules for Irregular Magazine, I was pretty excited. I've been getting more and more into historical wargaming in the last few years and I had not yet got around to playing a naval wargame - although it was definitely something I wanted to try.

So it was with some vigour that I dived into reading Victory At Sea, but some trepidation as well, since I had a notion that naval wargaming rules would be complex and difficult to understand. But I was pleased to find that that just isn't the case with these rules. The turn sequence is a simple set of four phases: initiative, movement, attack and end phase, which are simple and straightforward to follow and with a lot less record-keeping than I feared. A game of Victory At Sea runs pretty smoothly, especially when you're using one of the twelve historical scenarios that are given in the rule-book.

I think this smooth running of the game mechanics comes at the price of a small amount of simplification. Whilst I didn't find this bothersome, if you're really into your naval history and simplified rule sets bother you then Victory At Sea is not going to be for you. But since I don't know that much detail about real World

War II (WWII) naval vessels, I found the rules to give a great flavour of WWII naval combat in an enjoyable gaming experience with the scenarios being about right to fit into an evening's gaming session.

Although I didn't have time to try them out, there are also campaign rules that allow you to run a fleet and fight a series of encounters, gaining experience, losing ships and aircraft and repairing battle damage or recruiting new crew. I shall have to keep working on my gaming buddies to see if I can play out a campaign sometime!

There are two other things that I really liked about Victory At Sea. The first of this is the statistic blocks for each of the ships and aircraft that can be used in the game. Each of these has a paragraph of pertinent historical text and a photograph, rather than just being a dull list. Although it sounds trivial, this really engaged me in the rules and the background, and provided a launching point that made me go and research more about a lot of them. The final thing I really liked was that the published include counters at the back of the book for every unit that is described in the rules as well as counters for use in play that can be photocopied and get you gaming very quickly!

Although gaming statistics are given for the Royal Navy and the Kriegsmarine as well as the French, US, Italian and Japanese navies, the one major omission from the Victory At Sea rules are the omission of any statistics at all for Soviet vessels. Although not a significant factor in real WWII history, Victory At Sea does repeatedly emphasise the what-if scenarios that can be played out.

However, this omission is addressed in the companion volume Order of Battle, which has lists for the Soviet Navy as well as quite a considerable number of additional vessels for the navies covered in Victory At Sea.

**Order of Battle** also has extra rules that can be used to enhance games further such as dry land, shore batteries, running aground, mine-field and coastal forces in the form of motor torpedo boats, amongst others. Additional counters for the new ships, aircraft and rules are also included.

If you're thinking of giving the Victory At Sea rules a go, I'd strongly recommend buying just Victory At Sea book first and then if you like the rules, buy Order of Battle as well - unless you want that Soviet fleet from the start!

Overall, I really like Victory At Sea rules and I shall definitely be playing the game again in the future!

Victory At Sea, Mongoose Publishing, ISBN 978-1-906103-05-7

Order of Battle, Mongoose Publishing, ISBN 978-1-906103-13-2

## 6d6 Fireball Miniatures : Quorakons

### Dave Barker

<http://6d6fireball.com/>

I only recently discovered 6d6 Miniatures following a recommendation by a fellow DnD GamesMaster. They have a small, but growing, range of miniatures that are primarily intended for role-players, but which would seem to be suitable for any fantasy game.

I am glad I was on my home computer and not at work when I first visited the 6d6 website because I was immediately taken with the models on display and spent about two hours

reading everything I could find on the site, at the end of which my bank account was a little bit lighter thanks to GoogleCheckout and 6d6's online store! Amongst the first miniatures that I added to my order were the two value packs of Quorakons: the Village Pack and the War Party.

"What on earth is a Quorakon?" I hear you all ask. Well, apart from being an odd and difficult to pronounce name, they are nothing less than four-armed monkey men for fantasy games, and indeed, who doesn't want to add four-armed monkey men to their collection of miniatures?

I didn't have to wait long for them, either, as the miniatures were posted out very quickly. When they arrived I was pleased to see that they were nicely packaged in durable protective containers with inset labels that indicated to me that a decent amount of thought had been put into sending the miniatures out in the post, something that is often sadly lacking from other manufacturers that I have previously bought from online.

All of the Quorakons are cast with integral bases and they come with a selection of different weapons that can be used to customise some of them, as about half of the Quorakons have open hands that can accept any of the stone sword, spears, stone axe or wooden clubs that come with each pack.

On examining the miniatures, I was at first mildly concerned about the small amounts of flat, excess flash material around the seams of the miniatures - especially with these fellows being covered in fur! However, the quick - but careful! - application of a sharp craft knife quickly and easily removed this, leaving no sign it had been there.

These miniatures definitely have something of an old-school feel to their style, but fortunately there is nothing old-school about their level of detail, which is excellent. Although a couple of the sculpts are a little flat, I am definitely happy that I bought them and it won't be long before I have mine painted up and taking part in a game on a tabletop!



# My Top 10 Swashbuckling Movies

Cameron Cairney

When I was first asked to write an article for the 'Irregular Magazine' about the top 10 swashbuckling movies of all time, I didn't realise how difficult it would be to choose only 10 movies from this genre.

Although the term is now associated with heroism and daring-do, the origins of the word 'swashbuckler' are far from complimentary. The word was first used in around the 1560's to describe a swaggering braggart, bully or ruffian. The term comes from the antiquated words to swash (to make noise by striking) and buckler (a small round shield). A swashbuckler was considered a mediocre swordsman who compensated for his lack of skill with a sword by making a great deal of noise, staggering through the streets banging his sword against his shield, challenging passers-by to duels. It amuses me to think that a hundred years from now that the term 'chav' may hold similar connotations and that Eminem may be held in the same regards as Hollywood legends Douglas Fairbanks and Errol Flynn.

With the above said I have composed this list based on the following criteria: The film has to be a struggle between good and evil, there must be sword fights and daring do, with a dash of - for their time - breathtaking stunts or effects. Finally the hero/heroes (like me) must have a roguish charm/wit.

## The Mark of Zorro (1920)

**Douglas Fairbanks**

In old Spanish California, the oppressive colonial government is opposed by Zorro, masked champion of the people, who appears out of nowhere with flashing sword and an athletic sense of humour, scarring the faces of evildoers with his Mark. Meanwhile, the beautiful Lolita is courted by the villainous Captain Ramon, the rich but effete Don Diego... and the dashing Zorro, who is never seen at the same time as Don Diego. As Zorro continues to evade pursuit, Ramon puts the damsel in distress.

Although many would argue that *The Black Pirate* - see what I did there? Although it may not be on the list, it still got a mention - is the better swashbuckling movie directed by Fairbanks, *The Mark of Zorro* is unarguably the film that defined the genre. Though none of my children have ever managed to watch this silent classic I still fondly remember watching this film with my Granddad, and re-enacting the scenes by beating my little brother with a stick in my grandparents' back garden. Although you may be reading this and thinking of what you consider to be a better Zorro movie, just be glad I didn't use 'Zorro, The Gay Blade' (1981).

## The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938)

**Errol Flynn**

Based on the well known English legend, Robin of Locksley has gone to a state dinner fresh from killing one of the King's deer when Prince John tells him he is assuming power. Robin vows to stop him and collects every peasant he can find to create a resistance movement. Along the way, he meets, woos, and wins the Lady Marian who slips him information about Prince John's plans. When Marian is captured, Robin and his men decide to storm Nottingham Castle to rescue her. Although through the years many have donned the green tights, from Sean Connery and Kevin Costner to the only Robin Hood to speak with an English accent, Cary Elwes, Errol Flynn's Robin Hood is by far the most iconic. The genre defining version released in 1938 is argued by many as the film that placed the character and genre firmly on the Hollywood map.

## Scaramouche (1952)

**Stuart Granger**

Andre-Louis Moreau is a nobleman's bastard in the days of the French revolution. Noel, the Marquis de Mayne, a nobleman in love with the Queen, is ordered to seek the hand of a young ingénue, Aline, in marriage. Andre also meets Aline, and forms an interest in her. But when the Marquis kills his best friend Andre declares himself the Marquis's enemy and vows to avenge his friend.

He hides out, a wanted man, as an actor in a commedia troupe, and spends his days learning how to handle a sword. When de Maynes becomes a spadassin - one who coaxes someone, usually through insult, into initiating a swordsman's duel, and subsequently killing them with superior skill - challenging opposing National Assembly members to duels they have no hope of winning, Andre becomes a politician to protect the third estate and hopefully ventilate de Maynes.

My partner and children accused me of making this title up (disgruntled by the fact I did not include some of their favorites in this list, no doubt), and although you may not recognise the name I assure you that when you start watching this movie you will remember it from some long forgotten Sunday during your childhood around the Easter holidays.

### **The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958)**

**Kerwin Mathews/Ray Harryhausen**

When captain Sinbad and his men land on the island Colossa they are confronted with man-eating Cyclops. They can escape with the help of the magician Sokurah and his magic lamp. The lamp which contains a helpful demon unfortunately gets lost. Back in Baghdad the magician performs impressive tricks. He wants to start an expedition back to Colossa to bringing the lamp back in his possession. But the kalif rejects the magician's requests. The malicious Sokurah breaks into the rooms of the princess at night and shrinks the princess to the size of an elf. The magician offers his abilities to heal the princess on next day. But one of the magic potions necessary components must be procured from the island Colossa first. So captain Sinbad sails again to the island Colossa and to the dangers expecting him there.

This is the first of three Ray Harryhausen Sinbad movies, which also include 'The Golden Voyage' and 'Eye of the Tiger', each of which have their merits and golden moments. For me this movie was the best of the Sinbad movies, again tinted with nostalgia, as I find the Cyclops fight with the Hydra to be as iconic in my mind as the Obi-Wan Kenobi duel to the death with Darth Vader.

### **The Three Musketeers (1973)**

**Reed/Welch/Chamberlin**

Based on the novel by Alexandre Dumas of the same name, the young D'Artagnan arrives in Paris with dreams of becoming a king's musketeer. He meets and quarrels with three men, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, each of whom challenges him to a duel. D'Artagnan finds out they are musketeers and is invited to join them in their efforts to oppose Cardinal Richelieu, who wishes to increase his already considerable power over the king. D'Artagnan must also juggle affairs with the charming Constance Bonancieux and the passionate Lady De Winter, a secret agent for the Cardinal. Although I initially planned on adding the Disney version of 'The Three Musketeers' (1993), when comparing both movies the main cast of the original version just outweighed the Disney pretender by tons, although it must be noted that Oliver Platt's portrayal of Porthos was inspirational. With that said both films have amazing fight scenes and are a must for anyone looking for inspiration to run a 7th Sea campaign.

### **Star Wars (1977)**

**Harrison/Hamill/Fisher**

Princess Leia is held hostage by the evil Imperial forces in their effort to prevent the Galactic Empire being overthrown. Adventure-seeking Luke Skywalker and dashing Captain Han Solo team together with the lovable robotic duo, R2-D2 and C-3PO, to rescue the beautiful princess and restore justice in the Empire. For a more fun filled description of this classic please check this youtube video, Star Wars according to a 3 year old. Ok, I know there may be those of you reading this review and wondering why Star Wars is in this top 10 list. My answer is simple - if you were to take the plot of this movie and drop it in the Caribbean during the 18th century, changed space ships to large cannon firing boats, and swapped Tatooine with a pirate port, what movie would you have?



**The Princess Bride (1987)****Cary Elwes, Andre the Giant**

A classic fairy tale, with swordplay, giants, an evil prince, a beautiful princess, and yes, some kissing (as read by a kindly grandfather). This is the only film on the list that caused no argument with my loving family as a swashbuckling classic. This classic has it all, from quotable one liners - for which it is almost as legendary as a Monty Python film, such as 'Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.' - to amazing fighting scenes like Wesley vs. Inigo Montoya and battles of wits, this film I would say defines swashbuckling and adventure. If you haven't seen it I would highly recommend cancelling everything this Friday night and watching it.

**Cyrano De Bergerac (1990) -****Gérard Depardieu**

This French film tells the tale of the soulful poet/philosopher and expert duellist named Cyrano who falls in love with the fair Roxanne, but is ashamed to woo her because of his huge nose. Instead he writes love letters for the slow-witted, but handsome Christian in order to win her hand for him. She falls deeply in love with the author, but doesn't know they were written by Cyrano. Although subtitles may not be everyone's cup of tea this retelling of a classic is worth a watch as Gerard Depardieu's performance just oozes with charm and wit - also by adding it to the list I can feel all clever and warm.

**Ridicule (1996)****Charles Berling**

In the periwigged and opulent France of Louis XVI, an unwitting nobleman soon discovers that survival at court demands both a razor wit and an acid tongue. Although not the most adventurous of plots, I came across this film late one night on Channel 4 - no, it really isn't that kind of film - within 10 minutes of watching this charming French movie I was hooked. The opening scene is a young man urinating over an old man in revenge for his father's demise - again it really isn't that kind of film. This film is full of classic duels of wit and has been the inspiration of many 7th Sea plots I have run.

**Pirates of the Caribbean: Legend of the Black Pearl (2003)****Depp/Rush/Knightly**

'Pirates of the Caribbean' is a sweeping action-adventure story set in an era when villainous pirates scavenged the Caribbean seas. This roller coaster tale teams a young man, Will Turner, with an unlikely ally in rogue pirate Jack Sparrow. Together, they must battle a band of the world's most treacherous pirates, led by the cursed Captain Barbossa, in order to save Elizabeth, the love of Will's life, as well as recover the lost treasure that Jack seeks. Against improbable odds, they race towards a climactic confrontation on the mysterious Isla de Muerta. Clashing their swords in fierce mortal combat, Will and Jack attempt to recapture Jack's ship, The Black Pearl, save the British navy, and relinquish a fortune in forbidden treasure thereby lifting the curse of the Pirates of the Caribbean. Although the trilogy has many flaws, casting Orlando Bloom being a big one (trust me there is an entire article on that rant), Jack Sparrow's introduction and the duel with the Kraken are scenes we have all wanted to play in our role-play games. To think that this film is based on a Disney theme park ride, Johnny Depp and Geoffrey Rush have introduced the swashbuckling genre to a new generation (even though Orlando Bloom was in the film).

I have to note at this point that my partner, upon reviewing this list, asked quite pointedly why I had not put Cutthroat Island on the list. Laughing till my gut hurt may not have been the best response, and a cold and lonely night on the sofa allowed me to realise she was being serious. With that in mind it is worth pointing out that this list is not exhaustive and that many of you will wonder why I have put in some films and left others out. The answer is simple - like my partner not everyone shares my good taste in movies.

**Editor's Note** - If you're interested in trying any of the films on Cameron's list, we have set up an Amazon list where all ten can be found.

# Shadow Prowler by Alex Pehov

Dave Barker

Shadow Prowler is a newly translated novel from the Russian author, Alex Pehov. It is the first part of a trilogy called the Chronicles of Siala that has already sold over a million copies in Russia.

OK, that's enough of the dull bit! Shadow Prowler is a great epic fantasy novel in a style not entirely dissimilar from many that have been written before. Shadow Prowler follows the adventures of Shadow Harold, a master thief of Avendoom, as he finds himself bound into an apparently impossible endeavour due to his sense of professional duty, but with enough by the way of sub-plots and humour that it isn't just a long drag of a novel. It is set in its own fantasy world that contains all of the familiar fantasy elements, but with more than enough twists and different connections to make the world seem both fresh and familiar at the same time: Elves and Orcs are present, but they are related species; there are two different kinds of magic, but magic as a whole is on the wane; and Dwarves who would never go out in public without being clean shaven, to name just three.

The story is told from Shadow Harold's point of view, written in the first person, which does a good job of grounding the character of Shadow Harold and makes him feel very real. At the same time, it allows events to unfold beyond his view, building suspense and tension that caught me by surprise as much as they did Harold. Maybe it is an effect of the translation, but the writing style is sufficiently different to keep me interested and wanting to keep reading the book, even to the point where I was getting frustrated when I had other things to do instead! It has been quite some time since I felt that way about a novel!

The story often includes cinematic-style descriptions of the locations that I found great in setting up a scene, especially in the first half of the novel in Avendoom - at times I kept thinking of Ankh-Morpork, although the comparison probably ends with them both being fantasy cities.

If fantasy novels are not your thing and their usual fantasy clichés leave you cold, then Shadow Prowler probably isn't for you. But, if your reading tastes are more like mine and you like reading fantasy novels, especially ones that are in the epic, then I would strongly recommend Shadow Prowler. Personally, I can't wait until the second and third parts of the Chronicles of Siala are available!

Shadow Prowler, Alex Pehov, Simon & Schuster, ISBN 978-1-84737-563-6



# Savage Worlds

Richard Tinsley

I have been asked by the editor to write a piece on my favourite RPG system, Savage Worlds, which coincidentally it has two Pirate or swashbuckling settings - but more of that later.

Savage Worlds is adapted from the old Deadlands system, with characters buying dice to reach a target number of 4 on. Buying dice involves upgrading your dice for a certain stat or skill from, say, D8 to D10 by spending experience points to advance. This allows massive flexibility when it comes to character development. This is further enhanced by players being able to purchase Edges with their advances as well. Edges give your character just that, an Edge, in some way that marks you as being particularly good at a certain thing, or a career option which gives you bonuses in certain situations.

Savage Worlds is a generic RPG system which has a number of plot point campaign settings which you can purchase for about £23 each. While on the subject of cost, the core Explorers Edition rule book for Savage Worlds is a mere £5.99 and is without a doubt the best six quid you will ever spend on a role playing book!

As I mentioned earlier, among these plot points is not one but two Pirate/swashbuckling adventure settings; 50 Fathoms and Pirates of the Spanish Main. "What?" I hear you cry - do we really need two settings for the same thing? These settings, although sharing a similar theme, are very different; 50 Fathoms is set in a mystical world of pirates and buccaneers with Sea Hags and strange crab beings among its varied cast members. On the other hand Pirates of the Spanish Main is based on the collectable model game of naval warfare formerly made by Wizkids and is set in the Caribbean with background from actual history.

Both of these settings have their advantages, but for me the Pirates of the Spanish Main book is the superior product - the quality of the book and ease of use of the layout make

this much simpler to use and follow. Also it is far easier to add bizarre denizens of the deep into Pirates of the Spanish Main than it is to

remove them from 50 Fathoms.

I couldn't possibly write any article about Savage Worlds without mentioning [savageheroes.com](http://savageheroes.com). Savage Heroes is a fan run site which has a massive amount of conversions of other RPGs to use the Savage Worlds system; check out this page for the full list. Being fan produced material it is all free, of course, so £5.99 and some printing from your computer will allow you to play in the worlds of Farscape, Battlestar Galactica, Gamma World, Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, Aliens Vs Predator and masses of others.

If you haven't tried Savage Worlds yet my only question would be - "Why not?"

Next issue we will be looking at using Savage Worlds with the software Fantasy Grounds.



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